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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the three 2001 issues of The Bernard van Leer Foundation's "Early Childhood Matters," a periodical addressed to practitioners in the field of early childhood education and including information on projects funded by the foundation. Articles in the February 2001 edition focus on fathers and include: (1) "Fathers Matter Too" (Jim Smale); (2) "The Changing Roles of Fathers" (Wim Monasso); (3) "Involving Fathers in Community-based Early Childhood Programs: A Report from Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Region" (Farid Abu Gosh); and (4) "Men in Families: Exploring the Impact of Men and Reproductive Health and Choices in Mexico." The June 2001 issue focuses on children's rights and the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. The articles include: (1) "Rights from the Start: ECD and the Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Feny de los Angeles-Bautista); (2) "Moving Promises to Action: A Critique of the CRC from an ECD Perspective" (Robert G. Myers); (3) "Early Childhood Development Programmes and Children's Rights" (Caroline Arnold); and (5) "We Are Also Human Beings: A Guide to Children's Rights in Zimbabwe." Articles in the October 2001 issue deal with the Effectiveness Initiative, a study of how programs respond to and overcome obstacles, including: (1) "The Effectiveness Initiative in Mozambique" (Laura Pujol); (2) "Honduras: The Madres Guias of La Huerta" (Liliana Godoy R); and (3) "Kenya: From Objective Outsider to Objective Insider--An Experiential Case of Give and Take" (Peter Mwaura). Each issue includes information on foundation publications and announcements related to foundation activities. (KB)

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Early Childhood Matters: The Bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2001

Numbers 97-99

Jim Smale, Editor

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the bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation

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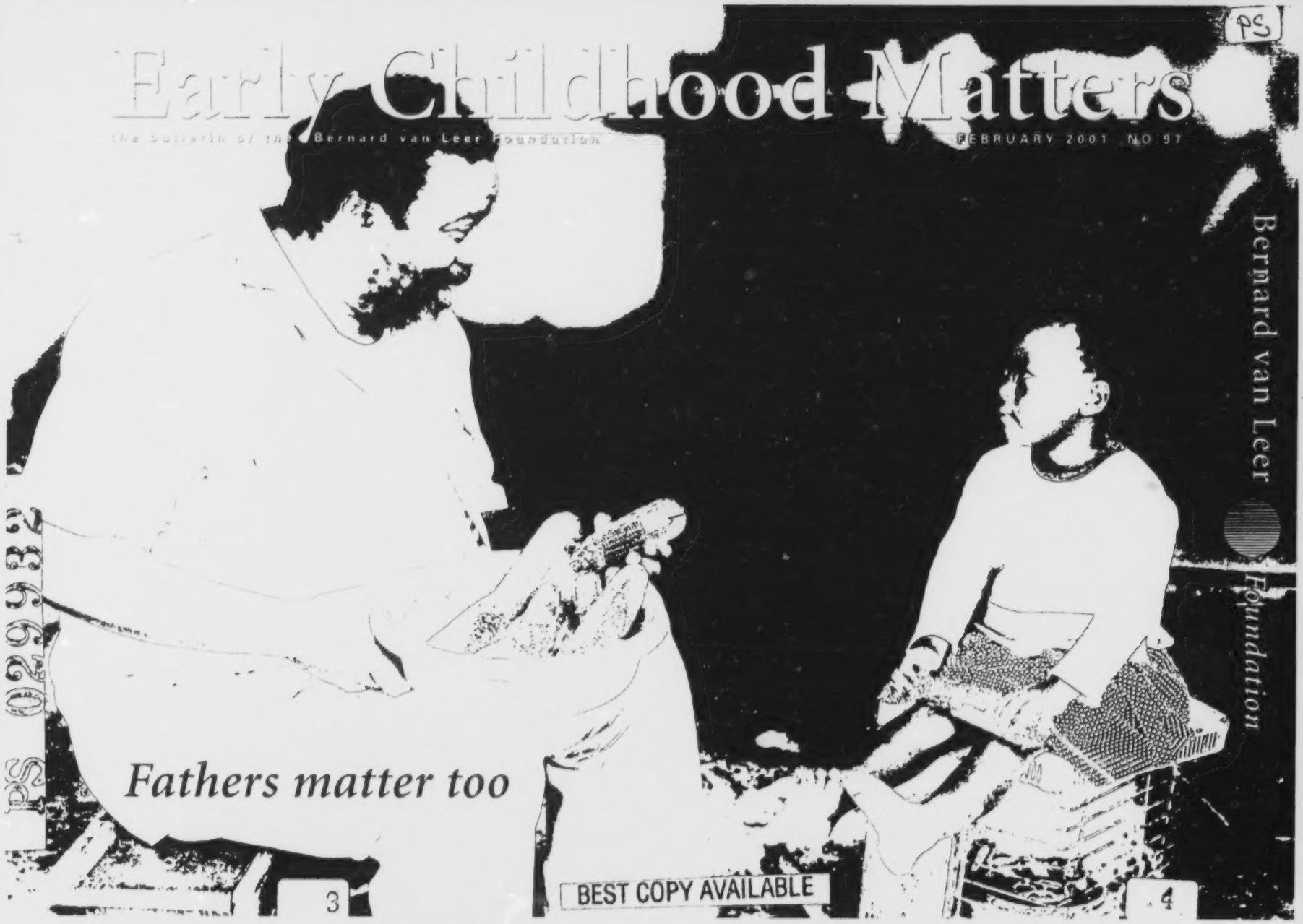

Fathers matter too

Bernard van Leer Foundation

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Cover: South Africa. Eating mealies
photo: Bob Pollock, Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU)

Inside front cover: Belgium. Woman, papa - making words on the felt board
photo: Mama project

As well as *Early Childhood Matters* the Foundation produces a wide range of publications about early childhood development. All are available – free of charge for single copies – to organizations or individuals interested in this field. A publications list is also available: please contact the Foundation at the addresses above and on the back cover.

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Fathers matter too

> *"Parents have joint primary responsibility for raising the child, and the State shall support them in this. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern"*
>
> (The Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Over the years, the Foundation has chosen to support work with families as one of the main strategies for enhancing young children's development. However, in the majority of the approaches being developed, 'families' stands for 'mothers'. This is despite an increasing recognition, worldwide, of the need to support the role of fathers within the family, and in particular in relation to children's development. And it is despite clear evidence that men want to be engaged with their children – and indeed, as a recent survey[1] confirmed, often are engaged:

- fathers have always been involved with their children. An overview of the research shows us that at any time over the past 40 years when fathers' activities have been measured, some men have always been reported as highly involved.
- They are sensitive and responsive to their young children.
- Most fathers say they enjoy having close relationships with their children.
- They provide vital practical support around the time of birth, and many state that they feel deeply moved by the experience of childbirth.
- They are often the main carers for children while mothers are working. In 36 percent of dual earner families it is the father, more than any other individual, who cares for children.
- Many fathers assume the major parenting role when the need arises.

The same survey also confirmed that it is beneficial to the young child to be raised by more than one carer; and went on to point out that babies usually bond as easily with their fathers as with their mothers. A parent's gender is far less important in affecting child development than broader qualities as a parent, such as warmth and kindness. Fathers themselves also reported that 'being with their children is the most fulfilling part of their lives'.

This survey may have been conducted in the United Kingdom, but its findings reflect what is widely accepted elsewhere: that when men fail to engage with their children, it is not something that is inherent in the fact of being male – although, as some of the articles in this edition show – it may well be something that is inherent in perceptions and understandings of manhood.

Against this background, this edition of *Early Childhood Matters* serves three purposes. First, it offers an overview of the state of play on work with fathers, tracing how and why fathering has emerged as a key focus for effective work with young children. Second, it draws out the key issues in fathering and discusses how these are understood and acted on. Third it offers a survey of what is being done, strategically and via direct work, to support fathers as they move towards the parenting roles that they, and their families, cultures and societies determine that they should have.

Building on what has been achieved

Although the need for work with fathers is coming more sharply into focus now, considerable efforts have already been made. Some of these are outlined in the first article 'The changing roles of fathers' (page 7) of this edition, and some – along with others – are discussed in more detail in the remaining articles. The Foundation itself has supported a range of initiatives with fathers since the mid nineteen eighties. These include work in: Zimbabwe; the Caribbean (see page 25); the Middle East/North Africa region; South Africa; the USA; Ireland; the United Kingdom; East Jerusalem,

Namibia: *Father and child*
photo: Erongo Pro Child project

Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Region (see page 18); Peru; Australia; Venezuela; The Netherlands and India.

Surveying these programmes in conjunction with the articles in this edition of *Early Childhood Matters* reveals some clear lines of development or evolution in the ways in which fatherhood is understood. A number of issues that frequently arise in work on fathering stand out; and shifts in the ways in which work with fathers is understood and practised are obvious. For example, a deficit model of fatherhood was sometimes used: ideals were set up, fathers were measured against these, and work centred on bringing them into line. Now there is acceptance that fatherhood can properly have a range of expressions, any of which can be right for children, the fathers themselves and their families, in their own contexts.

On the other hand, some issues that can be found in many settings have remained constant. One such is that the concept of manhood as established and lived by the men, and as generally accepted in their cultures, is at odds with men's roles as fathers. A response to this that evolved during the 1990s involves working towards a redefinition of manhood that includes fathering – and specifically loving and caring (see page 25). Linked to this is the more general need to acknowledge cultural norms and practices. Programmes have moved away from challenging cultural patterns to taking them as starting points to be considered and reflected on. The point is to ensure that fathers develop their own understandings about what is best for their children – and for the fathers themselves.

A second recurring issue is in some senses linked to the first: the difficulty of engaging men – young children are often seen as the responsibility of women, not men. One root cause of this may be gender stereotyping that children become aware of early in their lives, perhaps because of the ways in which gender roles are modelled for them. If that is the case, then one response is to counter it early. An example of how to approach this is provided by *What is a girl? What is a boy?*, a practical booklet that includes examples of gender stereotyping that children may already know. Using pointed and attractive illustrations, children are encouraged to discuss the examples and link them to their own experiences. As they do so, they recognise them as false.[2]

Western and non-Western perspectives

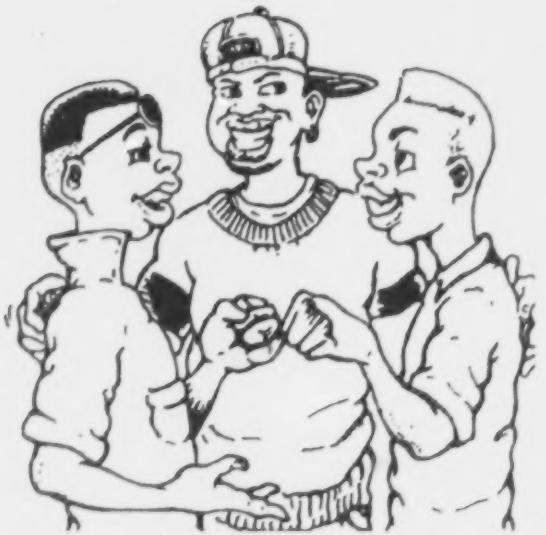
Two parallel lines of work around fatherhood can also be seen. One follows certain 'Western' social and economic patterns of change, and their implications for families and the roles and functions of fathers. Typical issues for Western fathers and families have included: work time versus parenting time; changing patterns of work for men and women and their impact on parenting roles; and the rights of fathers, particularly after family break-up. These issues are not exclusive to the rich societies in which they arise, but the approaches to work around them certainly reflect the vastly greater resources that can be brought to bear in resource-rich countries. Work has therefore included the development of substantial national organisations for fathers such as 'Fathers Plus' in the United Kingdom. These organisations also network internationally with their brother organisations and they are able to support major international conferences around fathering themes. Smaller scale initiatives have included: an informal meeting space for fathers to exchange parenting experiences with peers; groups of first-time fathers exchanging their experiences over coffee on their daily early morning commuter train; playgroups run by fathers; and antenatal classes for expectant fathers and their pregnant partners.

The second line of work runs through 'non-Western' ethnic or cultural groups. The issues that have arisen include sustaining examples of good traditional fathering practices in the face of factors such as encroaching economic and social pressures; and what to do about examples of bad practice. The work of projects supported by the Foundation ranges from helping migrant fathers to define their parenting roles in their new settings in The Netherlands, to exploring the practical implications of perceptions of fatherhood among rural Quechua-speaking families in Peru. In the latter, fathering is taken to include males loving and caring, and fostering, nurturing and teaching. In some senses, the work of the Karnataka-based reproductive health project 'A Sense of Rhythm' parallels this. The project is being implemented by the Family Planning Association of India in conjunction with the University of Groningen, The Netherlands; and is undertaking action research cum programme planning on men's perceptions of fatherhood.

However, none of this should imply that enough is being done. Even taking into account the strategic work that underpins and reinforces direct work (see page 12) a lot more needs to be done: too many fathers, across many different settings, are clearly not fulfilling their fathering roles as well as their children – and indeed they themselves – need.

Work in progress

Work with fathers is itself a work in progress: there is a very long way to go. And this collection of materials on fathering is also a work in progress – as has often been the case for *Early Childhood Matters*. We have gathered information and surveyed relevant literature from a wide variety of sources. But a major limitation we have faced is that the available information is dominated by the perspectives of industrialised nations – largely 'Western'. This reflects a continuing concern: that indigenous knowledge and experiences are not sufficiently available; and that, when they are, they are often filtered and interpreted by non-indigenous researchers. A much better balance is needed, not least because – as some of the articles demonstrate – there is a wealth of good attitudes and practices among indigenous fathers that is being inadvertently lost, often through 'Westernisation'.



Caribbean. Boys greet each other with clenched fists and back slaps
From: Why Man Stay So - Tie the Heifer, Loose the Bull, University of West Indies

The next edition of *Early Childhood Matters* will consider the impact of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on programming in early childhood development. It is being prepared for the United Nations Special Session on Children that will be held in September of this year. Topics to be addressed include: how much notice have ECD programmers taken of the Convention? How has programming changed as a result? What are the outcomes of these changes? If you would like to contribute your experiences I very much look forward to reading them.

Jim Smale
Editor

notes

1. Lewis C (in press) *What good are dads?*

2. More details about *What is a girl? What is a boy?* by Kamla Bhasin are available from: Jagori, C-54 South Extension, Phase II, New Delhi 110 049, India; http://web.tiscalinet.it/WIN/039b.html

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USA: Father and child
photo: High/Scope home visiting project

The changing roles of fathers

Wim Monasso, Programme Specialist, Bernard van Leer Foundation

Fathers are a vitally important resource to children and families on a huge number of levels. When that resource is missing or is underused, children and families are greatly disadvantaged[1]. This article is drawn from an in-house discussion paper of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. It is exploratory: designed to identify the issues that will help us to determine the Foundation's approaches to fathering and fatherhood.

The history of fatherhood cautions us to expect change in the roles men play in relation to their children. More and newer models – even ideals – of fatherhood, will emerge as economies and cultures, and the nature, structure, dynamics and environments of families, all continue to evolve and shift. For example, there is an accumulation of evidence in the Western world that indicates that paternal involvement in the lives of children has increased over the last three decades, both in proportional and in absolute terms. There is also substantial evidence that, for a variety of reasons, change is not always for the better: that fatherhood falls short of what young children need if they are to thrive, and often falls short of what fathers themselves would like it to be.

Why is there an interest in these issues now? One starting point was the Women and Development movement that, in the 1980s, highlighted the ways in which women supported families. This evolved and, in the 1990s, began to focus on the ways in which an understanding of gender issues in development brought men into the picture as well. There was an attempt to understand the complementarity of roles within the family. In order to develop an understanding of that complementarity, however, it is important to take a closer look at men's roles. From the Foundation's perspective, there is an even more specific focus: men as fathers, and their roles in supporting young children's development.

But roles have to be considered in context and part of this context is set by the economic factors that, worldwide, threaten the ability of families to survive. There have been enormous changes in the labour market that have placed increased stress on families; and this has impacted on men's and women's roles within the family, a cornerstone of which is childcare. Thus it is now critical to find ways to support men taking on expanded roles in relation to children. It is also important to reinforce roles that men already play. In many traditional cultures, men have always been essential partners in childcare, and often have very clearly defined roles, based on the age of the child. The Foundation's idea in supporting project partners around issues of fatherhood, is to find ways to

Dad gets money from his work
He buys food and pays the bills
Dad and I are going to pools and I am going to have lots of presents for my birthday

Australia: *How children see their fathers*
From *Fitting fathers into families: men and fatherhood in contemporary Australia*, CDFCS

reinforce rather than undermine these roles – perhaps especially as cultures are undergoing change.

Furthermore, with men now acknowledged in gender, population and reproductive health studies – and following the World Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) – there has been an increased interest in defining men's roles in sexuality, reproductive behaviour and family dynamics. One issue that has emerged is that reproductive health – everything related to contraception, pregnancy, childbirth and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS – is considered to be a woman's concern. 'Real men' do not concern themselves with this, although their gender has given them more opportunities to inform themselves – for example, by giving them more chances to become literate.

An historical perspective on fatherhood

It is clear that no father creates his fatherhood in isolation: whatever he does is measured against images which simultaneously amplify and dwarf the process of human fathering. This means that, when relating to a given father, we relate to our expectations of him. These can be strong or weak, 'castrating' or facilitating, depending on how he does or does not fit in with these expectations.

A most striking fact to be gleaned from the study of fathers and fatherhood is the centrality of the image of the authoritarian father to moral and political debate in the West over many centuries. While the behaviour of fathers is and has always been immensely varied, paternal imagery has been selective and limited; a main effect of this has been to veil other kinds of interaction between men and their children.

A review of father's images in art and text illustrates an ongoing campaign over the last 400 years of promoting an extremely limited range of fathering behaviours, that does not include involvement or empathy with infants. It is as if men have been urged to keep at an emotional and physical distance from infants so that they will be cut off from their most tender feelings – and thus alienated from themselves.

To compound this, industrialisation meant that the home became more mother-centred, and the division of labour between women and men more clear cut. Modernisation has taken this further: fathers and other earners may be away from home for the whole of the working day whereas the world of the family was once also the father's world of work. This separation of the worker from his family has been widely regarded as a calamity.

> *"I'm very protective of him because he's so vulnerable"*[a]

Understanding fatherhood

Fathers today are by no means a homogenous group: they range from those who produce sperm but have no contact with their offspring, through to those who take sole charge of their children. One current problem in understanding fatherhood is that research suggests that much of contemporary scholarship on fathers – notably in the USA – comes from a

deficit model that focuses on men's inadequacies as parents. They are labelled as having failed historically to adapt to changing social circumstances and realities, as not being involved in caring for children, and as having little or no interest in changing.

This image is reinforced in the media of Western countries, and appears to be unrelentingly negative, which presumably undermines fathers' confidence. For instance in the case of Australia, a national audit on fatherhood found, most strikingly, that fathers felt they had limited competence in their role as dads, whereas their partners rated them pretty highly. One of the conclusions was that fathers are doing better than they think or are led to believe.

Fortunately this negative 'deficit' approach is currently being criticised because it is not very useful as a starting point for helping fathers to improve their fathering. What is needed is an understanding of fatherhood that is centred on who men really are, what aspirations they have as fathers, and their own potential to change themselves. It must also acknowledge and respond to realities such as socio-economic factors, the balance between home-life and work, and cultural norms, all of which impact on men as they strive to be good fathers.

> "*When she smiles, I just melt* [a]"

Women's lives are usually described in terms of motherhood, while men are usually characterised as heads of their household or wage earners: men's value as intimate fathers tends to be passed over. Yet, men's commitment to their children is key to the quality of family life and the prospects of the next generation.

The family structure of mothers as caregivers and fathers as income earners has become, to a large extent, a myth, although still upheld by many aspects of social and economic policy. On the domestic front, while women have taken on an increasing role in providing income to their families, men have not taken up their share of responsibility in family life: responsibility for children, in particular, is still seen as belonging to the mother. This can be linked to the reality that, in many parts of the world, fathers are not living full time with their children. Some examples of female-headed households in a variety of countries are: Botswana 45 percent, Malawi 29 percent, Jamaica 42 percent, Peru 23 percent, Thailand 22 percent.[2] However, the lack of a resident partner is a much more significant variable if the potential for fathers' involvement in their children's lives is considered.

My dad always plays with me my dad goes to work at 6.30 am and comes home at 7.30 pm, and that's how we get money to buy food
My dad always tucks me in bed and the best part is that He also reads me a story I like to hear.
• helpful
• funny
• puts me to bed at night - always!
• lets me ride on his shoulders

Australia. *How children see their fathers*
From *Fitting fathers into families: men and fatherhood in contemporary Australia*, COFCS

One key reason for this separation is the need to move away to earn money. But the labour market is more subtle than that and is also shifting: currently there are many examples of increased levels of unemployment for men and increased levels of maternal employment. In addition, the absence of the father needs to be looked at in terms of cultural as well as economic factors. (see 'Redefining manhood' on page 25)

Three indicators which are consistently used to measure people's 'success' in later life are: moving up in society; fulfilment of potential; and capacity to form and maintain rewarding

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Fathers' participation:

observations and reflections

from a programme with Ethiopian immigrants in Israel

These observations and reflections were collected by the Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Child and Family in Israel (ALMAYA), as part of its work within the Effectiveness Initiative. More information about ALMAYA can be found at http://www.almaya.org.il/content/about/almaya.htm. More information about the Effectiveness Initiative can be found in Early Childhood Matters *96, October 2000. Single copies are available free on request from the Foundation at the addresses shown on the back cover.*

These are some of the points that emerged from a focus group interview with mothers who participated in the programme.

The mothers stressed the need to find a framework to incorporate the men, arguing that, as long as the men are not in the picture and do not participate in the programme, the programme will be incomplete.

Sometimes the men are destructive towards the Home Visiting Programme if they are not partners and aware of its importance. The mothers reported an example that occurred of a child who asked his father to explain to him some games or some other learning activity. It was difficult for the father to explain to his child. In many cases the father told his child to ask the mother and not him. The mothers described this as an unhealthy situation. In their opinion, this type of situation pushes away the connection between the father and child and only strengthens the connection between mothers and children. The mothers are worried (not for themselves particularly, but in general) that a situation will develop where the father will feel himself 'an outsider' and the respect that the child has for the father, will diminish. Violence between father and child may result.

Conflicts between the husband and wife may also develop about the type of education that is right for their children. The man may feel that the child and the mother are united against him. In addition, as long as there is no specific aspect of the programme that deals with the men's needs, the men will remain unaware of the importance of education in Israel. In Ethiopia the men were responsible for the children's education.

These are some of the direct reflections of mothers.

Develop an appropriate programme for the men if you wish the Home Visiting Programme to be complete.

The Home Visiting Programme is a good example of how to strengthen the children in their studies and the connection between the children and their mothers.

If fathers participate, the connection between the children and their parents would be complete.

A paraprofessional home visitor also reflected on the non-participation of fathers:

It's a pity that fathers didn't participate in the programme; the fathers needed the programme, in order that the child should feel supported by both parents and in order for him to establish better relations with both parents. Furthermore, if the father is not in the picture, the child treats him with less respect. The father is unable to appreciate the importance of schooling in the way the mother is. There is a very positive relationship between the mother and the child, and this can lead to conflict between wife and husband for they will have different views on how the child should be raised.

relationships. Parents' own success in these terms provides role models and examples for their children, and can therefore be an important success factor for their children. This may be critically important in areas such as the economic and social well-being of children, but has nothing to do with the quality of parental involvement in the development of children. Yet, if both are important, then the question is not whether involvement with children is better than the success of the family and its members as measured by the above indicators, but how the two can best be balanced.

Available evidence suggests that the more men and women cooperate economically, the more equally they tend to divide childcare responsibilities. Whether or not the father lives with his children, the quality of his relationship with their mother is also influential. In many cases, rewarding and sustained contact between fathers and their children diminishes dramatically soon after a break up when mothers have custody, although very few fathers lose touch with their children altogether. Fathers who were never married to the mother, generally have even fewer opportunities to provide sustained and effective parenting.

The significance of culture

Whereas economic and other factors influence the amount of time fathers spend with their children, cultural factors may have the biggest impact. For example, in many societies, limited participation in childcare of fathers is linked very strongly to beliefs that close father-child relations are not appropriate. This conflicts with widely expressed views from other cultures and societies that fathers should be encouraged to become significantly involved in the lives of their children. What then is known about cross-cultural differences, the impact of different religious beliefs, and differences across cultures in paternal behaviour?

Most gripping among modern studies is one that was carried out during the 1980's of the Aka Pygmies in Congo's tropical rainforest.[3] The fathers of this tribe proved to be the 'stars' of paternal involvement, doing more infant caregiving than fathers in any other known society. Forty seven percent of their time they are within arm's reach of their infants, they may hold the child close to their bodies for up to two (daylight) hours and often comfort the baby at night, singing softly. They clean the babies, wipe their bottoms, even offer their own nipples for a soothing temporary suck, if the mothers are not around. Aka babies seek out their fathers, while the women prepare the evening meal or sit idle, chatting; and, more like a Western mother, the father takes his cues from his baby. Aka fathers respond, no less than Western fathers do, to the culture and environment in which they find themselves. The difference is that the Aka culture and environment produce fathers who are heavily involved in the care of their children; Western cultures and environments commonly produce the opposite.

Clearly there is not one 'right way' to father. But there is a variety of cultural dimensions that determine the effectiveness of the roles that fathers play in relation to their children. A cross-cultural study by the High/Scope Foundation in the USA (1995), examined four year olds in 11 countries

> *"My father fed me my first mango.*
> *He taught me to play games.*
> *He carried me out often"*[b]
> *(Dhira-Mae)*

(Belgium, China, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Nigeria, Poland, Spain, Thailand, and the USA). It concluded that, on average, even children in two parent families spent about 11 waking hours a day in their mothers' care, one hour with both parents, and just 42 minutes in their fathers' care.[4]

Studies from India, Barbados and the Caribbean add to the picture

- India: 'The Girl Child and the Family' study[5] (1994) concluded that the role of the father in sharing activities with his daughter is so marginal that it reflects one of the great tragedies of Indian family life. In various enclaves around India where gender discrimination is pronounced, one finds it echoed in local phrases such as 'bringing up a

"*My father works.*
He helps me with my school work,
my maths and reading.
I ask him plenty questions.
My dad always answers questions.
My dad teaches me how to behave[b]
(Dhana, aged 5)
"

girl child is like watering a neighbour's plant'. However, a father may take a special interest in the upbringing of sons. The tasks of providing for food, education and marriage are in a sense the economic duties of the father, but beyond what is the basic minimum, the father steps out of the scene, surrendering his socialisation role and losing the opportunity to develop emotional closeness with his girl children.

- Barbados: A 1994 study[6] showed that eight year old children of adolescent mothers with good or on-going relationships with their fathers, appear more likely to do better at school and to have fewer behavioural problems. Factors emerging as significant were the level and the type of the father's involvement with his child, rather than the amount of time he spends interacting with the child.

- Caribbean: Research in 1992[7] on rural and urban low-income working class men, in relation to their mating and family life patterns, brought out different definitions of a man's family at different points in his life. These included family responsibilities to parents, his siblings and their children, his baby's mother, his 'outside' children (children from previous relationships), and children he may now reside with. While both men and women stated that a good father should provide financially for the family, both expressed very low expectations in terms of fathers playing an active role in raising the children. Even so, men and women experienced widespread confusion and contradictions as they tried to live out these expectations in a very difficult socio-economic climate. A tentative conclusion stressed the need to encourage the trends towards defining manhood and fatherhood (and motherhood) in broader terms that include nurturing, the sharing of domestic tasks and the father's part in providing financially for the family.

Conclusions

In summary, it is clear that the roles of fathers are changing, and changing in different ways, in different contexts, for different reasons. Unhappily, some of these changes are detrimental to the well-being of their children – and indeed, to the fathers' own well-being. In response, successful policies, programmes and services have been acknowledging the complexities and contextual realities of change: they recognise that generalised policies and programmes are unlikely to succeed. Instead, contextually appropriate, multi-dimensional approaches are needed that encompass cultural norms; the rights of all those involved; economic factors; social and family issues and factors; and the question of quality versus quantity in time spent with children. They also acknowledge and respond to men's potential for development across their life cycles; and to their internal desire to care for the next generation; and they build around the fact that actively caring for one's children is not only developmentally important to the child, but also central to the father's growth and well-being. In addition, the work to foster better fathering is long term, and starts early – for example, with young boys and girls, to counter sexual stereotyping.

In the development and support of these approaches, sophisticated qualitative and ethnographic research is needed. This must focus on the internal dynamics of families, and especially on parental relationships that relate to how decisions about childrearing are made. There is a need too, for data in areas such as the aspirations of fathers and the barriers to these.

Underpinning this work in a strategic way, the international donor community has strongly supported efforts to promote gender equality. For example, UNIFEM[(I)] and the UNFPA[(II)] jointly support gender project training activities around the world, and ILO,[(III)] UNICEF,[(IV)] UNDP,[(V)] WHO,[(VI)] and WFP[(VII)] have prepared guidelines and manuals on gender equality and sensitivity. For its part, the World Bank[(VIII)] is developing strategies and reviews of gender concerns in sectoral programmes. Private foundations are playing an increasingly important role in supporting national programmes to promote reproductive health and

Netherlands. *A visit to the children's farm*
photo: Ufuk Koba. *Dit ben ik workbook*: Anne Frank Stichting

gender equality. The next logical step for these organisations seems clear: a focus on the role of men as fathers building on such initiatives as reproductive health programmes. As recent UNFPA projects in Mali, Nicaragua and India on gender sensitivity and reproductive health demonstrate, men's behaviour can be altered, provided they themselves are strongly involved.

Some foundations have taken the lead in advancing the cause of positive fatherhood, others have joined efforts as donors to achieve maximum impact. For example, in the USA, the USD 20m 'Strengthening Fragile Families Initiative' of the Ford Foundation [18] has paid off both domestically and internationally. One key factor here was its long term and multi-dimensional approach: seven years of forceful work, balancing investments in a highly strategic manner between piloting, evaluation, research, institutional and network building, and advocacy for policy change.

But clearly nothing like enough is being done: huge numbers of fathers, in a very considerable range of settings, are not as central as they should be in the development environments of their children. If we believe that good fathering is as important to the growing and developing child as is good mothering, then a great deal more effort has to be invested in helping fathers to naturally fulfil their fathering roles. The United Nations International Year of the Family is in 2004. What better opportunity for advancing the cause of good fatherhood? ○

Sri Lanka. *Father playing with children and their play shop*
photo: Sarath Perera for UNICEF

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Father's money, mother's money, and parental commitment

Patrice L Engle

This article results from the author's work in reviewing a number of studies, carried out in a wide range of countries, that examined factors determining fathers' commitment to their children, and theories which could explain patterns of commitment. It is extracted from Patrice Engle's contribution to Wealth and Well-being by R Blumburg and others, and concentrates on 'non-western' countries and/or cultures. The original article also contains a highly detailed summary of two studies, one in Nicaragua, the other in Guatemala. Wealth and Well-being was published by the Westview Press in 1994. Further details about the book and other Westview Press publications can be obtained from Westview Press Inc, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, CO 80301, USA; and http://www.westviewpress.com

Studies identify the following major factors that determine fathers' commitment to their children:

- cultural norms in the society toward the fathering role; economic ability of the father to support a family;
- the nature or warmth of the father/mother relationship; and individual psychological factors of the men – the notion that only mothers are biologically programmed to attend to their children has not received support;
- a substantial body of literature suggests that although fathers in most cultures do not perform much child care, they can attend as warmly and responsively to their children as mothers.[1]

Cultural factors are important; for example, in patrilineal ethnic groups of Cameroon, it is acknowledged that the father's role is one of providing his children with lineage connections; the mother's responsibility is to provide food and economic support for both father and children.[2] He has little contact with young children. However, the cultural ideal of non-involved fathers is in rapid flux. Many countries report emerging beliefs that fathers should be involved much more in child care and nurturing than previously, although actual change is slow.

Other economic and cultural changes have resulted in less father responsibility. For example, in Chile a decline in the authority of the Church and in male privilege and an increase in television viewing and a demand for purchased goods, combined with rising women's labour force participation, have resulted in a rapid and dramatic alteration in the traditional authoritarian male role in urban, lower-class families.[3] The result has been men's flight from their responsibilities for child and family support.

Lack of father responsibility has been associated with poor income-earning power in the United States, and in the rapidly urbanising areas of developing countries. Father commitment has also been found to be associated with the quality of the husband-wife relationship; for some men, the responsibility to children and the relationship with the children's mother is a 'package deal'.[4] Rising rates of divorce and children born out of wedlock are increasing dramatically the number of children raised by single mothers. The culture with the highest rate of father/infant interaction ever reported (the Aka pygmies) appears to be based on a subsistence system which requires husband and wife to cooperate and communicate in order to obtain by hunting needed food.[5]

A few programmes have attempted to increase father responsibility, both among intact families and with non-resident families. Whereas the majority have been in developed countries, efforts are beginning in Jamaica, Lesotho, Bangladesh, Colombia, and

elsewhere. The more successful efforts have increased the amount of father/child contact and father's child support payments. These strategies have included:

- support groups in which fathers share their experiences with other men, and learn how to parent;
- economic programmes to provide men with improved skills for earning a living;
- skill training, particularly prenatally, which helps fathers to know how and when to nurture their children;
- education in schools for future parents;
- mass media presentations of new models for fathers;
- extensive opportunities to take responsibility for the care of children.

Fathers who have had the experience of extended infant caretaking tend to become more aware of the child's needs, even if the reason for their extended caretaking may have been economic rather than a desire to expand their caretaking roles. Often mothers play a large role in helping fathers to be more involved. Becoming 'attached' to a child, which occurs during early care giving, appears to be a significant factor in long-term father/child bonds.[6]

We still know very little about factors that influence father commitment to children. Despite the messages of the 'new fatherhood', and images which present a committed and involved parent, the reality is that fewer fathers are taking responsibility for the economic support of their children than have in the past. Social movements are demanding more of men at the same time that their status in the home is being undermined. Programmes to increase father commitment are in their infancy. Many programmes directed toward children, such as breastfeeding promotion, have not involved fathers. In development efforts, we must be wary of focusing on income generation for a mother without considering the increase in her workload, or the possibility that she could be supported by someone else while children are young. This calls for a development strategy to improve child welfare that not only provides opportunities for women's employment but also encourages father's commitments to their children. ○

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Honduras: *Father and child in La Cebadilla community*
photo: Elaine Menotti, Hari Fellow with CCF Honduras

Involving fathers in community-based early childhood programmes:

a report from Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Region

Farid Abu Gosh

The author is Director of The Trust of Programmes for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education. Following a pilot project in East Jerusalem, The Trust has accumulated 16 years of experience in development work in Arab Israeli communities, and in Palestinian communities in the Palestinian Autonomous Region. Throughout that time, it has included a focus on early childhood education. Generating and sustaining the involvement of parents – including fathers – has been central to the work from the beginning and, in this article, the author discusses the approaches that have proved successful.

In 1984, when the Trust of Programmes for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education began operations, there were almost no early childhood educational programmes for the Arab population in the Old City of Jerusalem except the very basic health education. The school system expected children to be enrolled at school with basic educational background experiences, and to follow the school curriculum: 'We have a book that should be finished by the end of the semester' summed up the teachers' attitudes.

We were dealing with 10,000 community members of whom a high percentage were unemployed and living on social security. The houses were very poor, and the neighbourhoods were all poverty-stricken. Predictably, children couldn't meet the expectations of the schools. In addition, relations between the schools and the parents were non-existent: there was a sort of hostile dependency of the parents on the schools, and the schools often blamed the parents for the poor achievements of children. Recognising this reality provided us with our point of departure and enabled us to discover our role: to not only prove that parents should not be ignored, but to demonstrate that parents are the school's major partners in their children's education.

Activities and achievements

The project began with a pilot phase that included: training para-professional workers; family daycare; home visiting; and leadership courses. At the same time, the project sought to influence policy makers and professionals. In 1988, the scope and institutional base of the Trust's work was extended and new components were added to the programme. These included: the creation of a strategically placed resource centre in the North of Israel; health and nutrition education; and a component for slow learners. A postgraduate course was also developed for community workers who, after graduation, were instrumental in building the Trust's network.

Over the years, and with continued support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Trust has expanded its programme with Palestinian Israeli communities. It has also gained support from other funders to disseminate its pilot programme in Palestinian communities across the Palestinian Autonomous Region (West Bank and Gaza).

The actual work targets disadvantaged families and children and is tailor made to the local situation. Incorporated are early childhood education and

community development activities. These may include the training and supervision of preschool teachers in centres; a component for youths who drop out of school; and a women's empowerment component focusing on training and counselling. The work with women has enabled them to participate in community development, including in the functioning of various committees, and the operation of preschools and educational libraries.

How we took action

In contrast to the usual top down government approach, our programme has always worked from the bottom to the top: both the planning and the execution of the programme was done in full partnership with community members, parents and members of the extended family. The programme had the following two central elements.

1. Orientation work for the preschool teachers who were to work with the children and the families. This element of the programme took the form of a course and subsequent supervision. It was critical to the educators who had to add a new dimension to their teaching role, and see the parents as partners.

2. Work with the families. The value of involving parents was a strong explicit element of our programme. It was quite easy to involve the mothers and older sisters both in the planning and the implementation of the programme. Mothers were both partners in the steering committee and at the core of the Mother-to-Mother component in which they were trained to guide other mothers from the community. These mothers were our key to entering the community and to the process of changing family attitudes towards children's education. Among areas that we focused on were: the importance of talking with children at an early age; the impact of communication with children; and the dysfunctionality of the physical punishment of children.

Within the early childhood component, the programme has also developed work with fathers. This is in line with the evaluation of the pilot phase that identified the need to concentrate more on bringing fathers into early childhood work; and was in response to the perception that fathers were not easy to engage, and to the fact that they seemed to like participating but weren't always able to. The evaluation also recommended continuing two effective approaches that had been tried out in the pilot phase: home visits to fathers; and Fathers' Clubs.

Visiting fathers

To make its work effective, the Trust has always believed that it is important to meet fathers in their social settings, and to work with them there to build a suitable intervention plan that meets their expectations and needs. This also helps them to be involved in the project and to begin to participate in the various activities of the Fathers' Clubs. But the project workers have to maintain, and sometimes intensify, the home visits in order to really understand exactly what prevents the fathers from participating. This helps them overcome the barriers to participation.

These home visits have a number of other vital functions.

- Furnishing knowledge about the father in the family context. This complements what the project already knows about mothers.
- Providing a more realistic view of the realities of family life. This includes dynamic interactions in the family and between the spouses.
- Building stronger relationships between the family and the project.
- Offering greater insights into the family settings.
- Allowing more private discussions with fathers to explore in more detail their problems and needs, and their expectations of the Fathers' Clubs.
- Allowing fathers to express the nature of their readiness to participate in voluntary public activities and to share in building up local leadership, by representing the community in the project.
- Allowing the project to intervene in families, in the sense of helping them to develop awareness of their needs, and of methods of fulfilling them.

To reinforce the home visits, fathers are also given guided tours of the programme and its various sections, and services and activities are explained

to them – especially the kindergarten, the Sisters Club (for girls) and the work with mothers (their wives). We emphasise the Fathers' Club during this visit, and explain its objectives and its services. We also introduce the fathers to existing members, and we introduce them to the three members of the Fathers' Committee who are elected in each centre. The members explain their duties, tell the fathers how to approach the Committee, and stress the importance of their participation.

The Fathers' Clubs

Fathers' Clubs are often launched with a meeting at which a proposed programme of activities is presented, discussed and modified, and then agreed and implemented. This process has often produced substantial changes in the proposed programme of activities. For example, the subject matter could be amplified from a focus solely on early childhood to include all child development stages, the characteristics of each, and the needs that children have. In addition, fathers have asked for lectures and discussions on family life and its characteristics and dynamics, interactions between parents, and family management.

Within these themes, specific topics to emerge have typically included:

- communications within the family;
- the influences of parents on their children, especially in the sense of role modelling;
- the influence of children suffering from specific conditions, on family life generally and on individuals within the family;
- the roles and distribution of labour in the family, especially cooperation between woman and man;
- identifying the roles and duties that fathers have in rearing young children; and
- the importance of play, and the roles and responsibilities of fathers.

The outcomes of this kind of work are brought together with the outcomes of similar work with women. Appropriate activities are then planned to meet the needs and to resolve the problems identified.

Such activities have to be planned in a participative way with the fathers, and in line with Arab values and customs: without that, the proposals for action would be met with disgust and rejection.

One typical activity is a social party for parents, which allows them to get to know and build social relationships with other families in the area. Such activities had previously been rejected by families. They accept them now, and we link this to a change in their attitudes about participation by younger family members in other joint activities – for example the Sisters' Clubs for girls mentioned earlier.

A second typical activity is a workshop for fathers on making toys. This may need a great deal of discussion and a great deal of planning to overcome problems in getting the fathers to attend. One major difficulty can be their perception that such an activity is work for women or children. Sometimes it has been necessary to ensure that early work is clearly in the male domain – that they learn and use carpentry or blacksmithing skills, for example. But it is only when the link is made to their children's need for such toys, and to their ability to meet this need, that they become enthusiastic.

A third typical activity is a study day for couples. This will have been developed around one of the concerns expressed by the fathers and mothers, and approved and planned by the Fathers' Committee. It could include a lecture, a film and a discussion about the lecture and the film.

Other approaches and experiences

We have found that the involvement of their wives stimulates men to take an interest in their children's education: they start to enquire about what their wives are doing in general, and then become interested in what their wives are doing specifically – for example, during the home visits. Later the wives may become encouraged and share with their husbands the printed materials that they take on their home visits. After this stage the fathers may start going to duty days at schools – peeling potatoes for example – and may take on roles in classes according to their capabilities. For example, they may explain to the children about their occupation and duties, and the children may be able to visit the fathers' work.

Working with Fathers' Committees has also proved to be a valuable way forward. Each of the three members are known to all and are regarded as

representative of the community. The functions of the Fathers' Committee are:

- to work in cooperation with the programme;
- to research the needs of the fathers in the communities;
- to suggest specific activities;
- to help plan them and ensure they are viable; and
- to encourage other fathers to fully participate in the activities of each centre.

One obstacle to progress was that childrearing in Arab society was considered to be for mothers only so it was considered an offence to fathers' male egos to be involved. However, the fathers were interested in working on influencing policy.

To move things forward, the mothers and the staff agreed to work with the Fathers' Committees on this basis, as a starting point. In cooperation with a team of teachers and social workers, a male supervisor was therefore appointed to work with the Fathers' Committees on ways in which they could engage more directly with their children's development and education.

Under the supervision of counsellors, Fathers' Committees learned to be active in local policy issues that affected the community. After seeing the success of our efforts, we started changing and developing the programme to meet the increasing needs of the community. This was a real empowerment process in which the fathers learned how to present their needs, and work effectively. They were ready to try to influence other organisations in the neighbourhood including schools and city departments. The Fathers' Committees, together with the fathers (husbands of the mothers who were involved in the programme as para-professionals), acted as ambassadors for the programme to other fathers who were reluctant to participate in the programme. The negative, authoritarian image of the father was thereby changed into that of a positive partner.

The Fathers' Committees and other active fathers, took full responsibility for the programme of activities; and were also actively supporting the organisation of sessions; study days; and group discussions with professionals such as physicians, psychologists, and so on.

Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Region: The Trust of Programmes for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education

Working with fathers: the lessons we have learned

Over the past 17 years we have gained a great deal of experience in working with fathers. The major lessons we have learned from this programme include:

- make partnership with parents into something valuable.
- Include the involvement of fathers in a holistic approach.
- Develop a system of respectful listening and start from where the family is.
- Be ready for a long process, and understand that we are dealing with social changes, which have to go hand in hand with local social values.
- Understand that this is a process of empowerment that will challenge the organisation's staff and programmes.
- In order to get involved, the fathers have to acknowledge their success and recognise their abilities.
- Finally, the programme should always be followed up by a professional team, in addition to continuous evaluation.

Men in Families: exploring the impact of men and reproductive health and choices in Mexico

> *Fostering greater involvement by men in reproductive health and decision making is one of the key objectives of grantmaking related to population issues.*

When a Chinantec woman gives birth in this mountainside village in Oaxaca, Mexico, the man in her life often actively participates in the process. In traditional home births, he may deliver the baby himself or act as an assistant to the midwife. 'I held her during labour, massaged her with hot oil to warm her, and collected firewood for her tea,' said one father in San Francisco, an indigenous village of 1,500. Said another: 'I gave her the birthing herb, attended to the baby, cut the umbilical cord, and did the chores before and after delivery.'

Men in San Francisco 'are intimately involved in the health of their partners,' says Kathryn Tolbert of the Population Council in Mexico. 'They are the preferred birth attendants and are rich repositories of information about herbal remedies related to childbirth. Men have extensive knowledge – down to the details of their partners' menstrual cycles – about pregnancy and reproduction.'

In addition to serving as labour coaches and herbal remedy specialists, men in the village are the gatekeepers – and often the barriers – to women's reproductive health services. Historically, 'men considered it their right to regulate women's health and fertility.' Says Ana Cortés, an anthropologist who lived in the community while conducting research for the council. 'Women were under great pressure to bear as many children as possible.'

With a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, the Population Council is examining the ways that men in this Chinantec town, and in several other sites in Mexico, influence the health and well-being of their families and communities. As with a similar project in India, the Population Council seeks to understand the impact of gender relationships on reproductive health and choices, to promote healthy reproductive behaviour, and to generate men's support for women's reproductive health and rights.

Men as gatekeepers to health

The role of men in shaping family choices is largely unexplored territory. For the past four decades, research and family planning programmes around the world have focused almost exclusively on women. This strategy leaves many needs unmet, according to Judith Bruce of the Population Council in New York. 'The inescapable fact is that women are often not carrying out their own wishes when it comes to their health, fertility, or many other parts of their lives,' she says. 'A primary reason women can't achieve their objectives is that they are not free to discuss with their partners their right to say no, to avoid disease, to determine the number and the spacing of their children, and to receive support during pregnancy, delivery, and childrearing.'

Today, the town council, a group of 30 men who wield the authority in San Francisco, prohibits the local government-run health clinic from giving talks about or promoting family planning. Women who seek help in planning their families often do so secretly and at risk of reprisal from their partners. According to an article by anthropologist Carole Browner, who worked in the village in 1981, local men once destroyed a tree because its bark, when prepared as tea, was used by women as contraceptive.

Ask Judith Bruce: 'What do women want men to know? And what information would men like to have to better support women? These are the

Mexico: Culturally Peripheral Communities Programme

questions we are answering with this research. We're searching for information that will help men and women form a better partnership in making decisions that have a profound effect on women's health and lives and on the well-being of their families and the whole community.'

Procreation and destiny

In San Francisco, as in most communities, attitudes toward childbearing have deep cultural and historical roots, says Ana Cortés. 'The community has a great fear about losing their population' she says. 'They survived epidemics that were rampant in colonial times. In the 1960s, a measles outbreak killed many children. They've also survived attacks from a neighbouring town over land disputes. More recently, emigration has greatly reduced their population and, especially, that of the neighbouring town.

'There's a sense that many children, especially sons, are needed to sustain the town's administrative, political, and religious functions' she says. 'Procreation is seen as intimately linked to the town's history and destiny.'

Until recently, very large families were considered the ideal in San Francisco. 'The community places a great value on education and takes pride in its burgeoning schools. 'Children are considered almost sacred,' says Karen Morris, who coordinated a survey of 240 Chinantec men and women. Men who were surveyed expressed their commitment to building up the town. 'We have children so the town will have enough people and so we won't be without human resources in the future,' said one man. 'Children will lend us a hand tomorrow, so that our homes won't be abandoned when we pass on,' said another.

A community in transition

Even in remote San Francisco, attitudes about families are in transition. In recent interviews, many men said they thought two or three children was the ideal family size, though many had far more. One man with ten children said, 'Although I would have liked to have fewer, God sent me all of these.' Another reflected: 'When you're young, you don't think about the consequences of having so many children until it's too late. You become aware after having had some schooling that it is better to have a small family.'

Understanding men's perceptions about their sexuality, their partners, and their children is critical to designing effective reproductive health programmes, says Kathryn Tolbert. Although men are often reluctant to discuss their private lives, she says, they open up when they understand the project will benefit the community. 'We're finding that men in Mexico are very interested in reproductive health. They feel left out of programmes directed toward women alone. They are waiting to be included.' ○

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Population Council: www.popcouncil.org
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Alan Guttmacher Institute: www.agi-usa.org

Trinidad & Tobago: *Learning fathering skills*
photo: Servol L[illegible]cent Parent Programme

Redefining fatherhood: a report from the Caribbean

Janet Brown and Barry Chevannes

Janet Brown is Tutor/Coordinator of the Caribbean Child Development Centre, School of Continuing Studies, University of the West Indies. Barry Chevannes is Dean and Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the West Indies. *In this article, they review the systematic focus of the University over 13 years on the differences between what mothers contribute to childrearing and the contributions of fathers. To do that, they discuss what has been discovered across Caribbean countries through a regional survey (1987); a pilot study called 'The Contribution of Caribbean Men to the Family' (1991-92)[1]; and a participatory research project called 'The Gender Socialisation Project' (1993-1995)[2]. They then reflect on some of the outcomes of this continuing work, showing the breadth and depth of the approaches that are necessary if there is to be effective change[3].*

'The Contribution of Caribbean Men to the Family' A pilot study in Jamaica

A survey of early childhood programmes conducted in eleven Caribbean countries by the Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC)[4] in 1987 determined that, despite growing recognition of and support for organised child care programmes around the Caribbean, on average 85 percent of children below the age of four remained at home, in the care of parents or other family caregivers. It also showed that parenting education efforts in the region were primarily directed toward women and teenage girls. Further, a search of materials on the Caribbean family produced considerable literature on women and mothers, but almost nothing on men and the family. Instead, stereotypes about men's attitudes and behaviours in relation to their families – mostly negative – were substitutes for informed data.

As a result, CCDC set out in 1990 to examine men's contributions to the family in Jamaica, undertaking to:

- provide a socio-historical perspective on the roles men in the Caribbean have played within and on behalf of the family;
- survey and describe the current attitudes and behaviours of a cross-section of men in Jamaica;
- use ethnographic/participatory methods to generate data and local analysis and problem solving related to the topics of the study;
- make research findings available in formats that would serve not only professional research/teaching interests but also the concerns of public educators, family life workers, and gender studies groups; and
- design formats and materials to be used in conducting similar investigations in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries that could provide data to complement the Jamaican study.

This initial study probed a range of issues related to men's attitudes and behaviours about family life and childrearing, through a questionnaire administered to 700 Jamaican men from two urban and two rural communities. Complementary series of discussion groups with men and women were conducted in the same communities as those surveyed or in adjoining ones.

It was soon apparent that this study needed to be concerned with *man and his families* because a Jamaican man's family is defined differently at different points in his life. There are life long family responsibilities to parents (especially the mother); to his siblings and their children; to the women who bear his children; and to his 'outside' children (children from earlier unions that he is not living with). In addition, there may be responsibilities to children of his common law or married life, with whom he now resides.

Traditionally, in Jamaican/Caribbean culture it has been clear that a man's primary obligation to his family(ies), his role as a family man and father, is that of **providing for the family**. It also showed that there were very low expectations of fathers playing an active role in raising their children beyond financial provision. Mothers carry the major burdens of childcare, and many are also breadwinners. If a father is able to provide regular financial support, he is deemed the 'rightful' head of the family, even when non-resident, and is expected to be the ultimate disciplinarian and a guide for his children. However, if unable or unwilling to provide sufficient financial support, he often remains peripheral to the family, literally or figuratively, fuelling the stereotype of the 'absent' and 'irresponsible' father.

Socio-economic realities and definitions of manhood

Two factors emerged that are significant in understanding the reality of how men actually fulfil the expected roles of fatherhood – or do not. The first relates to **contradictions** that men experience as they try to live out these expectations in a socio-economic climate which makes fulfilling them very nearly impossible. High unemployment and underemployment, migration to earn, women's increasing entrance into the formal labour market (away from home), the erosion of the extended family's resources to assist with child care: all present barriers for men and women as they attempt to fill their understood roles.

The second factor concerns the meanings fatherhood has for Jamaican men. Initially, 'getting' a child testifies manhood. Sexual prowess with females – preferably in multiples – is a strong cultural value, important to prove long before any consideration is given to settling into a stable union. Men in this initial study distinguished 'getting' children (being named as father, accepting paternity) from 'having' them, which implied maintenance and care, and was most often used for the children of a more mature man, or one able to provide and be a real father. While men derived self-definitions from paternity – believing that without children they would be incomplete, lonely, empty, less mature – for many, 'getting' children was sufficient for this end. Ability to provide for them bears little weight, particularly for younger men, in accepting paternity.

In this first study, **nurturing** children was rarely described as a man's function. While the majority of men in both the survey and discussion groups described their active, often daily, participation in tidying, playing and reasoning with their children, and in helping regularly with homework, these tasks are perceived by most men and women as primarily women's work. Men themselves do not yet value them, particularly if the man is not seen as the breadwinner and thus family head, roles that imply authority and decision-making status.

The study in fact indicated that men are far more involved in positively contributing to family life than popular stereotypes suggest. They have clear ideas about what good fathers should be, agreeing that they should counsel and communicate with their children, be responsible with the mother for inculcating moral values and social skills in their children, be the financial providers, and act as role models. On the other hand, many admit they cannot or do not always fulfil their responsibilities to the extent they feel they should. Irrespective of some men's efforts to redefine manhood in more fatherly ways, economic deprivation can serve to retard the development of more positive mating and childrearing behaviour. Attitudinal change and structural changes are clearly interrelated.

Other emergent issues from the Jamaican study

The interviews and group discussions pointed to a number of other lessons learned.

- Men welcome the opportunity to talk about their family relationships, particularly in groups of men only, where they felt less need to be defensive.
- Many feel great pain at their own shortcomings as fathers, whether they blame themselves, their partners, or the wider society for these deficits.
- The frequency and quality of the man's relationship with his children was highly dependent on his relationship with the child's mother.
- Outside children are often sacrificed to the welfare of those children within current unions.
- Little is known about the quality and impact of stepfathering by women's new partners.
- Conditions of poverty and underemployment, and the growing economic independence of women, leave both men and women calling for changes in division of labour and responsibility in matters of childrearing, but as yet there are no real challenges to the traditional gender roles that constrain these changes.

'The Gender Socialisation Project'
A participatory research project in Jamaica, Guyana and Dominica

In 1993, the University of the West Indies, at the invitation of the Caribbean office of UNICEF, began a two year participatory research project to redress the shortage of research literature on men's family roles and to provide material which would further understanding of how gender roles are played out within families. Six communities, three in Jamaica, two in Guyana and one in Dominica were chosen as study sites, representing a range of urban to rural, and no-income to low-income, Indo- and Afro-Caribbean populations. The project's rationale was similar to that of the pilot study in Jamaica discussed earlier, but was also cognisant of such factors as:

- male under-achievement in schools relative to the performance of girls;
- the 'feminisation' of the education system;
- obvious early gender differentiations, and the implications of these for children's identity, relationship formation and social roles;

Dominican Republic
photo: Esperanza Luengo

Trinidad & Tobago: Father and child in preschool
photo: Servol

- high and rising crime rates, particularly for young males;
- the number of male street children;
- and the disproportionate number of males in penal institutions and children's homes.

In many ways, the research project can be seen as a conceptual extension of the Jamaican study. It started from the view that the male's role in family and community decision making, in influencing the nutritional and psychological development of children, and in sharing financial responsibility for family welfare, has not been well understood. It then went on to consider how cultural and economic factors at both local and regional levels – which determine how gender roles are defined – vary greatly and should therefore be considered in the design of development programmes.

Common themes emerged from the findings of the ethnographic teams who spent approximately six months visiting the communities. These themes are summarised below.

Caribbean manhood

As in the Jamaican pilot study, discussions of the concept of manhood concentrated almost exclusively on three elements: sexuality/sexual identity; man's primary role as provider and protector; and scriptural authority for man as family head.

Sexuality/sexual identity
This was usually measured by the number of serial or concurrent female sexual partners; and by the resultant number of children. Fear and disgust of homosexuality were commonly expressed, with many parents believing that certain childrearing practices or child behaviours could lead to this 'deviance'. Demonstrating manhood enhanced the self-image of young males

and alleviated the worry of parents about homosexuality. Sexual activity for boys therefore begins early, often with the discreet knowledge of parents, and the encouragement of fathers.

Man's primary role as provider and protector
A man who cannot provide for his family is not a man. Even when a female partner is working, providing for the family is never seen as her major responsibility. Related to this role, man also is to be the 'protector' of his family, implying not only literal defence of his children against adversity, but ensuring their financial security. Domestic tasks are still seen as predominantly women's work and do not enhance a man's self-image. Nurturing and homemaking skills, when acquired by men, are not generally seen as options that broaden the definition of manhood, or as substitute contributions when financial provision is lacking.

Scriptural authority for man as family head
Manhood implies authority, particularly over women and offspring. This authority is seen as natural, being part of 'God's plan'.

Almost equally with men across the six communities, women subscribed to these elements of manhood. But, as the Jamaican study also concluded, an inherent dilemma lies in this pattern. Scoring high 'manhood' points as a young man by early sexual activity and secured paternity with multiple partners sows the seeds of later difficulty, even impossibility, in achieving success at later stages of manhood. As some respondents expressed it, some men never become real men who can meet the later criteria for manhood, beyond the exercise of their sexuality.

Man/woman relationships

Man/woman relations are characterised by high degrees of distrust and disillusionment. The following themes which emerged repeatedly in all community discussions, evidenced this overall characterisation.

Male-female fidelity
Men generally defended their right to and need for multiple partners although some stipulated that this should not interfere with the maintenance of their children. Women saw their own concurrent or serial partnerships as economic necessity, while men saw female infidelity as unacceptable for any reason, and punishable.

Men's ultimate power and authority
The assertion that man is the head of the house remains the point at which almost any discussion of male-female partnerships begins and ends – if not in fact, at least in spirit. It is defended by Christians, Hindus and Moslems as religious tradition, ordained by God, and as historical and cultural inheritance. More recent forces – such as harsh global economic realities, the international women's liberation movement, and foreign media intrusions – are credited by both men and women with challenging history and tradition, upsetting 'natural order' and contributing to the erosion of man's authority in the home and to power struggles between men and women. These struggles often seemed related to the growing economic independence of women, and affected all areas of family life.

Expectations of men as primary source of family finances
It was always understood that men are responsible for giving their partners money to run the household and to support the family's needs. Women generally see any money they earn as their own, to spend on the household and on themselves, as 'insurance' against any future desertion by their partner, or for any outside children they may have. There were wide-ranging opinions on whether, and how much, earnings affect power relationships between men and women. Better education for females, women working outside the home, and male migration were often discussed as threatening male headship and upsetting relationships.

This study reinforces previous research findings which suggest that the partnership with the children's mother becomes vulnerable and the man's authority tenuous when he cannot provide sufficiently for his children. Other women, and long hours in the rum bar or at the domino table with male friends, are common male recourses to the resulting financial pressures and demands, reinforcing his marginal status to his family(ies).

Division of domestic labour across traditional gender lines

Men and women see division of labour differently: the male is prescribed the roles of breadwinner, provider and protector, and the woman assumes the roles of homemaker and nurturer; this division largely determines how men and women see domestic duties within the home. However, the discussions revealed that men often do a considerable amount of work within the domestic sphere, especially when children are young and can't share in the labour. But there were many contradictory and ambivalent messages about whether such tasks really belong to men or are only required when a woman can't manage all of the work. Such participation is rarely celebrated by men and not always by women, some of whom see a very domesticated man as 'soft' or as someone who watches and criticises everything the woman does in the home, thus intruding on her domain.

Domestic violence as a result of broken relationship 'contracts'

Not all groups discussed this topic freely, but some had candid and heated debates about the levels of acceptability of physical violence against one's partner – usually men beating women. A rough thread that ran through the accounts of partners resorting to violence was the notion of broken contracts, contracts that were often based on unstated or misunderstood expectations. For example, a man was defended in a group for beating his wife when she didn't prepare dinner for him on a Friday night. Why? Because he was away from home all week doing farm work to support his family. He kept his side of the bargain, but she didn't.

Whether the woman feels she is entitled to challenge the man's authority often relates to the woman's level of education and/or financial independence. When a woman feels she can survive without depending on a man's labour, that she has options by way of her education or with other available men, she is less inclined to accept physical abuse, and may in fact prefer to live without a man at all.

Give and take

Distrust, disillusionment, broken contracts, domestic violence ... these certainly did not characterise all the man-woman relationships in all six communities. There were many men and women who still spoke of love, of sharing and equity, and of give and take, and humour and mutual respect redeemed many a potentially inflammatory discussion of sensitive topics. However, the degree to which more negative sentiments dominated many conversations represents a significant outcome of the socialisation patterns common in raising the children who become men and women.

Parent/child relations and practice

The research suggests that traditional childrearing strategies are becoming less and less effective. At the core of traditional strategies is the concept described in Guyana as 'Tie the heifer, loose the bull', implying the protection and monitoring of daughters while sons are allowed, even encouraged, to have more freedom and independence. For a girl, the point is to avoid early pregnancy while equipping her for economic independence and/or (usually and) partnership with a man. In contrast, sons are encouraged to develop independence and assumption of responsibility by seeking earnings; and early sexual encounters are considered normal.

The ultimate goal for both boys and girls is that of gaining economic independence and readiness to take up the responsibilities of providing for and protecting a family. But gender distinctions and assumptions are central to most childrearing practices. These include a preference for boys because of their economic potential and because they carry on the family name; and the prevalence of homophobic myths about the development of male sexuality.

In addition, parents feel increasingly helpless against external factors that influence their children. The survival strategies traditionally employed in raising boys seem no longer realistic. Education and skill acquisition for a livelihood by traditional routes – school achievement and apprenticeship – are often blocked or severely hampered by economic deficiencies at home and in the school system. If boys do not drop out of school to earn for themselves or their families, they often leave school with few skills that can be turned to ready profit. 'By any means necessary'

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for some becomes an alternate strategy, as more and more young men end up in illicit activities to achieve their material goals; on the street instruction in these skills is readily available, particularly in poorer urban settings. In such settings, apprenticeship opportunities to learn useful skills are less available and less attractive.

Protection strategies for girls are also increasingly difficult to enforce. The need for mothers to work outside the home reduces opportunities to supervise and instruct. Liberating options for girls and women have expanded their choices outside home and family, and the growth of consumerism has fuelled a range of economic activities among girls and young women, including bartering with sex to meet their material needs. Urban environments, in particular, also offer ready exposure to alternate lifestyles to girls as well as boys. Such lifestyles often appear to work against the values and goals of parents.

External factors in socialisation

In addition to the many economic factors that impact on families, on definitions of manhood and on fathering, other external factors were also investigated by the research teams, including the influences of peer groups, social class and ethnicity, community role models, organised religion, education, and other cultural and subcultural institutions.

The influence of the peer group is perceived as being dominant, particularly as children reach puberty and beyond. Many parents feel that they have little countervailing influence against peer pressure as the teen years approach. There is considerable evidence that peers and peer groups (such as sports clubs, school cliques, street gangs) more strongly influence male socialisation than female.

There were numerous references to the influence of the media, particularly television, in conveying and strengthening non-traditional images and ideas that are perceived by many informants as having a negative impact on cultural values and practices – including traditional gender roles – that they would wish to preserve. The influence on children was decried most often, but some men also declared that their wives spent too much time watching soap operas and neglected their duties in the home.

Caribbean: *Men generally defended their right to and need for multiple partners*
From: *Why Man Stay So - Tie the Heifer, Loose the Bull*, University of West Indies

Organised religion, on the other hand, whether Christian, Hindu or Moslem, is seen as both generating and supporting traditional roles and values. But church/temple attendance and religious practices have a stronger hold on girls than boys, largely through differential parental enforcement and/or the perception that boys are under less parental influence at earlier ages and can

therefore stop attending on their own. Interfaith friendships are less often opposed on religious grounds as on the fear that strong cultural/ethnic traditions will be eroded and contribute to family conflict.

If social class differences were examined more thoroughly than was possible in this study, many differences would be found in the areas described above. In one community, teachers agreed that upper classes in the present day Caribbean are more susceptible to cross-cultural (including cross-ethnic) influences on gender roles, while the lower classes tend to cling to traditional male/female roles. These effects on the upper class are not always seen as positive, as this same group of teachers felt that street gangs are primarily the work of children of wealthy parents who are so busy accumulating wealth that their children are left unattended and unguided, and are thus easy prey for the Western youth cultures through films, television and other media.

Much more investigation of persons' understandings of cultural/racial/class differences is clearly needed, as these attitudes to history, community and self have obvious implications for the socialisation of male and female children. Discussions within this project barely scratched the surface of these issues.

Acting on the research: 1995 to the present

Overall, the research findings suggested the need for a range of interventions to target the key socialisers of the young: parents, educators, church leaders, sports coaches, musicians, and community leaders, as well as the young themselves. Such interventions should facilitate exploring, without defensiveness or fear, the ways in which cultural/social constructions of gender roles can erect barriers to selfrealisation and familial role satisfaction for both men and women. Bob Marley's plea to 'emancipate yourself from mental slavery' speaks evocatively to both men and women about many of the unchallenged structures that constrain them. It was felt important to encourage the trends, however tentative, in the direction of defining manhood and fatherhood more widely to include nurturing, and the sharing of domestic tasks. It was also felt that a man's broadened investment in family roles would not only be of greater benefit to his children, but that he, too, would benefit from being a better father, and from improved relationships with his children and their mother(s).

A number of initiatives followed directly from the research, supported by UNICEF:

- participants from five of the six communities in the research shared with their communities in skits, songs, school poster contests, discussions and other activities, their perceptions of the research and its implications for them.
- Three symposia were held between June and October 1995 in the three countries studied, to present the findings of the research to a total of 185 programme and policy level colleagues. The symposia each addressed:
  - implications for policy, education, employment, health, community organisation and development, and family life; and the roles of the media, churches and other mentoring organisations in acting on the implications.
  - Specific programmes and strategies for following up these issues, particularly for developing a deeper understanding of the Caribbean male in family, community and national life.
  - The implications for further research.
- In May 1996, a new Caribbean radio drama series was completed and made available to radio stations within the English-speaking Caribbean and to stations serving West Indian communities abroad. The series presented many of the common and often contradictory attitudes and perceptions of Caribbean men about themselves within their various worlds – in relation to women, their children, friends, and the wider society. The primary objective of these programmes was to foster more discussion and debate, and more personal reflection about the important ways in which men and women live out their social roles day to day, how they pass these roles on to their children, and how they see these roles changing. Although these programmes were aired in many countries and – reportedly – were repeated in some, no systematic feedback on impact was obtained[5].

- In 1996 Participatory Learning for Action (PLA) methods were used to examine gender-related issues at community level in St. Lucia, Grenada and Jamaica, confirming many of the findings of the earlier studies.
- In Jamaica the focus of this activity more specifically addressed how very young children are socialised into gender roles. Funds from the international Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development made this possible as part of a multi-country study[6].
- Materials based on the research have been developed for use in multipurpose workshops on gender equity and gender role confusions/contradictions. Two short summaries of the two research projects have been published in user friendly formats, one a workbook of participatory sessions to explore the common issues of the research in community groups, the other used by University of the West Indies students in several courses as well as available to the general public.
- A full monograph by Chevannes will be available in the first quarter of 2001.[7]

Without the benefit of specific impact studies, it can only be hoped that these project output activities have compounded and perhaps accelerated the growing awareness of and pressures for change in Caribbean definitions of manhood and fatherhood. While the numbers of children born to teenage mothers is still rising slightly, change is reflected in a dropping overall fertility rate and shrinking family size. The costs for caring and educating each child at least through secondary school are steadily rising in a no-growth economy, and government is not yet able to provide a social safety net that ensures a minimal level of living standard for all.

In this climate, gender issue debates flourish on the plethora of daily radio and TV talk shows, in theatre offerings, youth group meetings, parent-teacher meetings, etc. Several organisations have sought to channel these airings of often contentious and contradictory topics from simple ventilation to a more structured focus on personal reflection and change, and on collective problem solving, aided by skilful facilitators.

Since the 'men only' sessions kickstarted by the Caribbean Child Development Centre in 1991 (see box on 'Fathers, Incorporated' on page 37), several groups have used this approach to try and develop men's agendas for change. Religious groups have been in the forefront, organising several men's conferences with calls for more responsible fatherhood and a 'return to family values'. Jamaica's inordinate number of churches, large and small, are made up of predominantly female members, even though the pulpits remain a largely male domain. The church community as a whole feels it has a strong mandate to help restore men to their Biblical/traditional role within the family, and as responsible providers for their children.

Some church groups take this outreach role to men well beyond the pulpit; there are many church-sponsored sports clubs and church men's groups who work with young boys, particularly in activities designed to reduce their risk of antisocial or illegal behaviours. One such new group formed in 1999 calls itself The Gappists, taking its name from the Biblical reference to God's search 'for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land, so I would not have to destroy it'. Founded by a group of mostly young university students, the Gappists have organised a summer camp for low-income boys in a nearby high school, and have held a series of seminars aimed at aiding men and women to better understand issues of male identity, male sexuality and fatherhood. They have also recently established a Gappist chapter in a prominent all boys high school, targeting future leaders.

The discourse on these issues has qualitatively deepened over these past years, and has become more than just defensive retorts to feminist challenges for change. The discourse continues across the Caribbean. We note a men's group in Trinidad formed against domestic violence;[8] university-level seminars on issues of manhood;[9] male parent groups meeting regularly in Dominica;[10] a fatherhood conference scheduled for Belize in 2001;[11] and a male adolescent programme for teen fathers that extended into a parish-wide men's movement in Jamaica.[12] A report on men's workshops in the Eastern Caribbean highlighted how in the dark most men are about how their bodies function, and how male-unfriendly most of the health care systems in the region

Caribbean: *Overflow families prefer to have the male child first*
From: *Why Man Stay So - Tie the Heifer, Loose the Bull*, University of West Indies

are in specifically addressing men's ignorance and fears.[13]

More recent research has served the dual purposes of keeping manhood and fatherhood issues on the public agenda as well as supplying policy and public debates on these issues with harder data. This is illustrated in the following four studies.

1 A UWI three-country examination of youth attitudes to family and gender relations[14] showed that for children and teens, money is 'critical in the very definition of the role of the male in relationships', and that 'the family was a contingent, negotiated accomplishment' that took into account property ownership and control of resources as much as fulfilment of gender role expectations. The greatest bitterness expressed by these young persons towards their fathers related to non-performance in their role of economic provider; they did not expect much else from them. However, it was reported that lifelong respect was gained by mothers who juggled roles of both mother and father. Violence in man-woman relationships was seen as inevitable by these children, not much more than an extension of the often harsh disciplinary practices they have grown up with. Young boys complain that they cannot get the attention of their female classmates, who look for older males with earnings.

2 The UWI's Fertility Management Unit has just completed a major study of male reproductive behaviours.[15] One section of the report examines men's attitudes to unwanted and ill-timed pregnancies; it was significant that the pregnancy of a man's 'bona fide' partner (primary among multiples) could be considered mistimed, but rarely unwanted. The children which resulted from unprotected, casual sex, were most often unwanted. A second section of the research describes men's concepts of fatherhood, strongly underscoring the findings described in the two studies herein reported. Throughout the study poverty intervened to largely determine a father's 'fate':

In denying men the opportunity to perform the function that is central to their concept of fatherhood, poverty robs them of their self-esteem. One of the most poignant and instructive remarks made in the focus group discussion suggests that a mask of indifference often hides a mountain of despair: 'Sometimes a man want to do something but he can't. So him just pretend like him nuh want fi do nutten.' [Sometimes a man wants to do something but he can't. So he just pretends that he doesn't want to do it.]

3. A major longitudinal study of almost 2000 Jamaican children[16] who were assessed on a wide range of variables at birth and again at age 11, provided some sobering data in relation to fathers.

   - Half of the mother-father unions at birth had ended over this period, most in the first three years of the child's life.
   - One third of fathers did not continue their parenting roles; a high percentage of these maintained no contact with the child.
   - In examining school performance and behaviour, the father's presence in the home, a stable parent relationship, and higher level of parental education were associated with positive child outcomes in the study group.
   - Conditions of poverty were demonstrably evident in these findings.

4. Data compiled by Chevannes[17] has provided further insights into the phenomenon of male under-achievement at all levels of formal schooling. Chevannes' review of Ministry of Education records clearly documents high male drop out rates, poor male school attendance, male avoidance of 'female' subjects (such as English!), and differential treatment of boys and girls throughout the school system. (See also Evans[18]).

How do these latest research activities bear on redefining maleness and fatherhood?

- They have raised serious alarm bells among educators, policy makers, service organisations, and the business sector, as to the implications of growing numbers of under-educated males fuelling unemployment lines and the nation's jails; some even worry about the implications for educated women seeking 'suitable' male partners.
- The 'marginalisation' of the man to the family is now seen as a wider 'under-participation' of men in the broader social goals and values of the society – thus no longer only a complaint from women about inequitable domestic loads, but a more broadly expressed fear for the fabric of the whole society.
- The reports draw attention to the strains on men unable to support their families without migrating, or resorting to illicit activities.
- More and more women will be carrying the double parenting roles, and the numbers of children without adequate care and supervision will continue to grow as a result.

The way forward

The decade of raised awareness of fatherhood issues that began in the arena of gender role disparities and contradictions is moving into a new period of broader debates, engaging men in examining issues of identity formation, in challenging traditional cultural values, and, for some, in reasserting their right to greater access to their children.

These new debates have forced many men and women to ask deeper questions about the kind of society they really want (in the face of perceived erosion of traditional family roles and values), and about the roles men are to play in economic climates analogous to quicksand for many. Add in an educational system that appears to be programming male failure, and issues of redefining manhood and the roles of fathers move to the front burner.

The challenge for those who are concerned about children's rights and welfare within these debates is to ensure that the importance of men as fathers, as nurturing, supportive and protective influences in their children's lives, becomes central. This is nascent but happening. The emergence of child rights issues over the past decade, originally almost a foreign concept to the culture, has aided in reminding the society of a child's right to the care and attention of both parents, and has brought the broad needs of children beyond just financial support to greater public notice. Preschool and primary school practitioners have begun to focus more deliberately on parent involvement and education, joining churches and community groups in this endeavour. A National Coalition on Better Parenting has emerged to share strategies and

Dominican Republic. *Boys preparing a meal*
photo: Esperanza Luengo

materials among scarce professionals and local community-based organisations, in order to strengthen the engagement of fathers and mothers in understanding the critical importance of their roles. There is visible evidence on the streets of men caring for their children, taking them to clinic, even fighting for their custody in court.

But there is much more work still to be done with and by men, before they can more publicly begin to celebrate these aspects of their manhood; before they can understand their direct opportunities to affect positively their children's performance and behaviour; and before they can see that their investments of time and caring have to go beyond financial support. The Father of the Year Awards (see box on next page) have provided one such public celebration in Jamaica. Its impact on real behaviours is not known, but it is a move in the direction of enhancing men's self-concepts with the nurturing aspects of fathering. This direction is slowly gaining momentum.

Conclusion

Ten years of research and experimental interventions still add up to only the start of greater understanding of gender socialisation issues in the Caribbean, and of removing some of the obstacles that define male-female relationships and gender role conflicts. Education, in all its broad definitions, is critical in challenging many of the constraining attitudes and values transmitted daily from adults to children. Education planners and policy makers, in tandem with community leaders and NGOs, must continue to provoke personal and collective reflection and problem-solving, while at the same time seeking deeper understanding of the underlying cultural, economic and psychological causes for some of the society's most harmful inequities. In all of this, the welfare of children, particularly in the earliest formative stages of their development, must come to the foreground of this agenda, so that men and women work together at gender role resolutions, with their children at the centre of their exchanges.

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3. Some parts of the article have been drawn from Brown J 'Gender relations and conflicts in fathering' in *Coordinators Notebook*, 16, 1995; The Consultative Group on Early Childhood and Development (CG). More information about the CG is available from http://www.ecdgroup.com

4. The Caribbean Child Development Centre (CCDC) of the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies was established in 1975 to promote healthy child development in the region through training programmes, research, curricula and other materials, and policy

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9. University workshops/seminars: a) 'Family and quality of gender relations' (1997) University of the West Indies, Mona; b) 'The construction of Caribbean masculinity: towards a research agenda' (1996) University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

10. The Social Centre, providing most of Dominica's preschool services, has convened fathers' group meetings for many as part of their parenting education programme

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Fathers, Incorporated

A workshop in 1991 for fathers only was attended by 17 men; participants at the Caribbean Child Development Centre's (CCDC) first parenting symposium. A common denominator among these men was the belief that women stereotype them unfairly as irresponsible fathers. Under the leadership of facilitator Dr. Barry Chevannes, the group was eager to meet again, and a core group of approximately ten men began meeting weekly, calling themselves Fathers Only.

When CCDC held a second parenting symposium a year later, this time for men only, the Fathers Only group assisted during the day of workshops. As the culminating activity of that day, they officially launched their group with the new name Fathers, Incorporated and began a recruitment drive.

The group became involved in a range of activities – volunteer work in a government children's home, peer counselling training, a workshop on Violence, Self and the Young Male (1993), and provocative radio spots, defending against the blanket negative images of Jamaican fathers that prevailed. Twice, with external funding, they sponsored exchange visits: one with representatives from St. Lucia's longstanding Mothers and Fathers organisations, the second a seminar tour featuring two African ethnographers from Cameroon and Kenya, talking about fatherhood in those countries. One year they sponsored a major musical concert to mark Father's Day.

Despite keen loyalty from a core group that remains strong, Fathers, Incorporated has remained a volunteer group of primarily blue collar workers for whom earning a living has to take priority over their volunteer activities. The University's outreach arm of the Department of Sociology and Social Work has lent research assistant and student time to aid their activities, but extending the organisation nationwide has so far been beyond their energies and scope.

However, four years ago Fathers, Incorporated launched what perhaps has provided the greatest impact of the group to date: they sponsored an essay contest among schools, asking applicants to state why their fathers should be named 'Father of the Year'. Considerable media attention is given to this contest which culminates on Father's Day each year. The profiles of the responsible and caring fathers who have won each year have provided public models for the kind of fathers that young persons would desire to have, and the kind of celebration of nurturing fatherhood that helps advance these qualities as self-enhancing for men. They are optimistic that in the year of their 10th anniversary, they will find some longer-term solutions to their organisational weaknesses, so that they can continue calling for and celebrating responsible, caring fatherhood.

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The father in San culture: oral histories from Botswana and Namibia

Willemien le Roux

For 12 years, the author worked in different positions with the Kuru Development Trust, the last eight years as Training Coordinator. Kuru is a community-owned development organisation for mostly San people[1]. Towards the end of her time with Kuru, she undertook a study on the educational situation of San children in Southern Africa, interviewing many community members in Botswana and Namibia. San people from each of the various language groups worked closely with her on the interviews, and also on formulating the conclusions. Among these collaborators was Kamana Phetso, one of the most prominent young leaders of the San in Botswana. He had been with Kuru since 1992, and was Secretary of the Kuru Board for the past six years. Tragically, he was killed in a car crash in January 2001, on the eve of his departure to Australia to work with an aboriginal programme for a year.

This article shows the real challenges that face parents and children in environments that constrain and devalue them, and that also weaken ancient practices and beliefs that have traditionally provided positive support for the healthy development of their children. A number of clear themes run through the article. These include: the interface of San children with the education system and the clashes that result; and the differences between San and non-San with respect to discipline.

Willemien le Roux is currently coordinating an oral testimony programme with the San people for WIMSA[2]*, assisting community members to use tape recorders to record their own and their families' experiences and thoughts about a range of topics, many of which they suggest themselves. For her, an important aspect of the collecting is to take this information back to the communities. The programme therefore includes workshops and other devices to allow people to reflect on who they are so they can inform their own decisions.*

Botswana: *San children dancing*
photo: Willemien Le Roux, Kuru Development Trust

The people were sitting in a circle outside their hut, a small fire burning in the centre. At a quick glance they looked no different from the people in the other huts in the small village around them, homes we had been visiting all morning. But my colleague Kamana Phetso's eyes met mine and we smiled.

We had found them. We had been looking for the past few days for the remaining San people in this area, the Eastern side of Botswana, as part of a research project funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, in collaboration with Kuru Development Trust and the regional San organisation, WIMSA.

In the other parts of southern Africa it had not been as difficult to interview and meet San people as here, for their languages and culture are quite distinct and they live in either government determined resettlement areas, or in conservation or nature areas. But here in the east, the San have mostly lost their languages and have almost completely integrated with the Tswana and Kgalagadi groups around them, so the distinction was not that easy to make.

The five children in this family, ranging from six months to fifteen years approximately, were sitting among the adults as we were going through our questions. A toddler of about four years was putting more wood on the fire to help his father, who was cooking in a three legged pot. The pot was obviously too small for the whole group. The man was stirring the soft porridge with a wooden three-pronged fork. While he was doing this, the four year old leaned against his father watching their meal cook, his arm around the man's neck. The baby was suckling her mother's breast, while an aunt and possibly a grandmother were watching. We were all sitting on the ground, the women squatting in that remarkably lithe pose typical to San women everywhere, knees bent outwards alongside their bodies with skirts tucked in between their legs.

We asked: 'You and the other people here say you are the Basarwa[3]. But why is that, since you speak the same language as the other people?'

'We are Basarwa because we are poor'. The younger woman answered. 'We have long lost our language and our culture, but we know we are Basarwa since all other people progress, but not us'.

Kamana and I looked at each other again. Sad as her words were, showing such utter desperation, it was clear that they had not completely lost their culture. One of the features of the San culture we had come across all over the trips to several San groups, had been the distinct role of the father in the upbringing and care of the children. Another has been the equality of men and women – a consequence of women's historical importance as food gatherers in the days when the San people roamed free. Although there were specific tasks in food gathering assigned to men and women, things like daily chores and raising children were shared more equally. Many things are changing in the San's lives and these special features are under threat in most areas, due to the influence of stronger and more powerful groups who have moved into their areas. Yet, even in areas where men had started to play a bigger political role than women, we still observed the free interaction of children and fathers, and the ease with which fathers do certain tasks in caring for young children – things which, in most of the male dominated cultures around them, would have been passed on to the women with condescending grunts.

In certain areas we asked about the role of the father in the upbringing of the child. Mostly regret accompanied the stories that followed. 'This is how it was in the old days, but we do not manage it any more'. The !Xõo and Naro people in the Aminuis reserve in Omaheke district, Namibia, gave long accounts of the importance of their fathers' teaching, especially for young boys.

> *There was a time when the fathers taught their sons about living in the bush. It was almost like giving a course to a young man ... The young people stopped wanting these courses. Today that time is over. Now we realise the importance of traditional knowledge, and 'though we should make an effort to retain as much as we can for our children, some of the power of that knowledge is lost. (!Xõo man, Aminuis Corridor, Namibia)*

In D'Kar in Botswana as well as in the Rietfontein area in Omaheke, Namibia, we were told about the important role

Botswana: *San parent and child at a traditional dance festival in D'Kar (Bokamoso promotes traditional dancing in all preschools that take part in its training programme)*
photo: Mattias Hofer

of the father with regard to discipline or behavioural instruction. There were exceptions, especially in more integrated societies, but the majority of the San people interviewed still vowed that corporal punishment was undesirable. They said that disciplinary methods were based on community approval of good behaviour, and group disapproval which could result in ostracism.

> *Discipline had to do with the laws of nature. Some children were not allowed to eat certain berries and roots, so that nature would keep on providing. If these laws were broken, the rains would not come as they normally do. If you did not listen to these taboos, you were responsible for the downfall of everybody, and everyone cared for the well-being of the whole group. (Naro San man, Aminuis Corridor, Namibia)*

The cornerstones of San traditional education were experiential learning and observation, integrating the child in every aspect of life. The San child, even as young as two years old, would be allowed to experiment with what many other cultures view as dangerous objects, such as fire, knives, and needles. The adults would always be close by, however, and would either be busy with the same activity alongside the child, demonstrating care, or would be encouraging the child verbally on how to handle such items without endangering themselves. The father's craft making (bows and arrows, axes, leather work, wooden tools or crafts) would be copied by the boys, while the mother's beadwork, preparation of wild food, thatching or clay building would be copied by girls of all ages.

The child's 'lessons' consisted of discussions with adults on equal grounds, analysing a practical situation in order to draw a hypothesis on the basis of which further action could be judged. 'Look at this spoor. Can you guess how old it is? How far would the animal be ahead of us?' The consequent finding and killing of the animal tracked, would prove the hypothesis or qualify it, making an indelible impression on the participating child's mind. Little boys were allowed to experiment with hunting by setting snares, using tiny bows and arrows to kill mice, birds, and so on. When they were old enough, they would use arrows with poison, an act that would also announce the advent of manhood and be celebrated by all, by praising the young hunter's skill with song and dance.

Although a distinction was made between the father's and the mother's teaching roles where boys and girls were concerned, in the past this distinction only concerned the food-gathering activities. It was based on the division of skills needed for survival in an often hostile and harsh environment: the most effective use of energy and human resources was an issue of life and death. Today, many San people emphasise the importance of story telling, dance and

games as part of their education, and the important role of the father in these activities for both boys and girls. Traditionally, San culture generally did not even have the same taboos following child birth, found in many other African cultures. For example, a San man had immediate access to the new-born infant and bonding took place from an early stage. This kind of flexibility and interchangability of roles was necessary in a hunting and gathering culture, since mobility was of utmost importance. Everyone needed to help carry (goods, children) and everyone needed to help find food when on the move (see Draper and Harpending, 1987 and Biesele, 1993). Another reason for this more flexible environment in childrearing had to do with the fact that homes were never permanent structures, and in a mobile lifestyle there were also no doors to exclude children from adult talk or activities.

However, since they were treated in such a free and equal way since early childhood, San children in today's mixed societies are often perceived to be unruly and undisciplined by teachers and caregivers of other groups. The different disciplinary systems of the cultures they are moving into cause conflict and confusion, and many cases of the drop-out reported to the research team were related to that issue. In other cultures the father especially is seen as the one to instil fear and obedience in such 'problem' children using corporal punishment. That means that there are expectations in these other cultures for the San father to play such a role and pressure is put on them to develop this responsibility in forums such as parent-teacher associations. But this fails to take into account the role of the wider San society.

> *"... the best caregiver is the natural caregiver – what is the role of parents and caregivers in supporting development of learning in children? We should not forget that"*[4]

To test these perceptions and to measure the changes in today's San societies with regard to the father's role in disciplining his children, we spent much time on these issues during our interviews.

'What then would San parents do if a child misbehaves, or refuses to adhere to the norms of society?' We asked in various interviews.

We know this can happen. And sometimes the mother of such a child does not find it easy to teach the child how to be a good member of our society. Often the mother as well as the father of such a difficult child protect the child. Then they need other people in their group to help them. (Ju'/hoan San elder, Mogotho, Botswana)

I was very naughty when I was small. Then I was assigned to my grandfather. He kept me next to him all the time. He kept me from doing wrong things, all the time until I became like a human being. I did not change immediately, but he made sure that he knew what I was doing, always. (Naro San man, Donkerbos, Namibia)

We were informed that the father's role in many San cultures can also be extended to the oldest uncle on the mother's side.

The child knows that the mother and father do not even have the last word and that the uncle is there. He is not only the child's protector, but if the child has problems, he knows that the uncle will be the final one to discipline him. (San woman, D'Kar, Botswana)

The purpose of the above mentioned research was to compare progress in formal education among all of the more than ten San groups in the whole region of southern Africa. Children dropping out of school at various stages, but especially in the early years (between four and eight) as well as the puberty years (11-14) still remains one of the most disturbing phenomena of modern San society. It reflects how the deterioration of their social structures and the alienating systems of education (their only option by which to join the changing economy around them) affect the general progress of San children.

The report of the research, called *Torn Apart – San children as change agents in a process of acculturation*[5] shows that San parents generally supported the idea of formal education for their children as a means of assisting their people to bridge the gap between their old lifestyle and the modern world they were entering into. However, they were torn between this need and the fact that this same education that they needed for survival was alienating children from their parents and their culture.

In addition, educators and extension workers who wanted to facilitate change for the San people, saw children as an entry point into San culture. Many children dealt with the pressure from both sides by dropping out, thereby showing their resistance to both the foreign and often hostile environment they were forced to enter, as well as to their parents' expectations of them as change agents.

One of the main reasons for the lack of control parents seemed to have over their children dropping out of school, was the diminishing role of the father as educator. In many cases fathers have been forced to accept jobs away from their families (construction, cattle herding, road labour) because unskilled labour needs in the remote areas where most San live still favour men above women.

This changing economic situation of San people all over southern African has brought about the unfortunate separation of children from their parents, but more especially their fathers. In addition, the nature of the manual labour that many San men revert to for an income is such that the children can no longer share these tasks. The nature of paid employment also clashes with leisure time and the ability of fathers to decide how to fill their time, and this also makes it more difficult for them to adapt their tasks to their children's needs.

The new economic situation and structural changes in the San's environment, have also severed the extended family groups of the past. These fast changes are due to the new sedentary life caused by loss of land, border construction and resettlement schemes. These have divided families and forced people to abandon their hunting and gathering ways of the past.

In a large number of cases, women have become single parents due to casual relationships with men from other groups who are either passing by or have come to do temporary work in the areas where the San live, but who have no intention of marrying a San woman or of taking responsibility for children born from such relationships. This is due to the low economic and social status of the San everywhere, which not only relates to their present poverty situation, but also to their hunter-gatherer past, a profession which has always been scorned by pastoralists or agriculturalists. This attitude towards the San has contributed greatly to their present economic disadvantage: they lost their land, since they were not seen to be 'using' the land in a legitimate way.

San mothers find themselves unprepared for the responsibilities of single parenthood, and for raising children without the support of a man or even the wider family group. Many of their previous educational practices were not identified as education per se, but accepted as part of the act of growing up, and were not necessarily the mother's task. Learning new skills and adapting to behavioural expectations were so much part of ordinary living, integrated in the total society, that San mothers as well as the extended family members now find it hard to identify the specific areas where the father's absence leaves a gap to be filled by others.

In the few cases where San children were found to have succeeded in modern education, it was striking how the father's influence was mentioned as playing a role in the child's success. The following two examples show this.

1. Masego Nkelekang comes from the village of Mancotae, in the Nata area in Northern Botswana. She speaks Chire-Chire, a dialect of the Shua people. Until the end of 2000 she worked as a fieldwork-coordinator for Kuru Development Trust in D'Kar, Ghanzi. She finished her first degree at the University of Botswana and is currently studying for her Masters degree in Britain.

   In her primary school years, most other children were also San. She started experiencing discrimination against her only when she had to leave her village to go to Junior

Secondary School, where she found that everyone despised the San children and therefore some children preferred not to disclose their origin. Some of the San children performed better than the oppressors, however, and that helped build their self-esteem and gave them endurance.

In her early school years, her parents had to pay for most of her expenses. Masego ascribes her success in school to the support she received from her parents, in particular her father. He is not a literate man, but has always been very persistent that they should finish school. He checked her progress with the school authorities and every term he studied their school reports carefully, asking someone who could read to tell him about every subject, and wanting to know if they did not do well. He is presently Vice-Chair of the Parent-Teacher Association and serves on the School Committee. (from the book Torn Apart – San children as change agents in a process of acculturation – see note 1)

2. Tienie Mushavanga is a 22-year old Kxoe student at the Caprivi College of Education. He graduated from Max Mukushi School, but his family originated from the village of Buada in West Caprivi.

After the first school break, Tienie and some other boys ran away from school. He stayed away for a year. Even though his father, the Headman of Omega, asked him to return, he did not force him, but continued with his traditional education, such as telling the children parables with animal characters and taking the boys along when he hunted with spear and dogs. There were other children who stayed with Tienie's parents for the sake of school because their homes were too far. This made him go back to school again.

His father's desire that he should go to school and his support from home, as well as role models – a student from the polytechnic and the San headmaster at Omega who has since passed away – inspired him to continue in spite of hardships. His devout Christian belief also gave him courage. The San learners at Senior Secondary, who were a minority and were seriously harassed by the Mbukushu learners, stood together and organised themselves. They did performances from their own tradition in the hostel and when volleyball teams were introduced they worked hard at being better than the others. Other problems were caused by teachers who were not serious about their work. He said some were only interested in status and money and instead of trying to encourage the learners or gain their respect, they become over-friendly and in some cases even use older boys as mediators to get them girls.

His biggest concern is that Kxoe culture is not passed on enough by the school system. The youth are angry with their parents for not having enough money and they feel a sense of loss for the things in their culture that are vanishing. (from an interview conducted by Steve Felton, as part of the research for the WIMSA/UNICEF film Torn Apart)

But despite these examples, the responsibilities of educating San children in these transitional societies are most often met with bewilderment by many San parents. Outsiders who work with San people believe that they have 'lost all control over their children'. Indeed many San parents have reported that they had started to revert to corporal punishment, or worse, that they condone separation from their children by sending them to hostels at a very tender age, or that they even allow their children to be 'adopted' by wealthier and more progressive people as the best way to educate them for the new world they are entering. The increase of alcohol and drug abuse among both San men and women – one of the evils of transition and resettlement in all San societies – has also taken its toll on the education and care of children. This is used to strengthen the case of those who see separation of San children from their parents as the best solution for the acquisition of modern education. It is disturbing that these practices have such profound echoes of the history of Aboriginal and Native American children. Although it is now widely acknowledged how detrimental the separation of these children from their cultures has been, it seems to be repeating itself in Africa without too much resistance.

To try to address these realities among at least some of the San people, the Kuru Development Trust was established in the early 1980s with support from outside donors, including the Bernard van Leer Foundation (Bram le Roux 1998). The Trust is a community-owned development organisation with a holistic approach to development and a range of interlinked and interdependent activities. These include: income generating projects; a savings and loan scheme; cultural activities; and a training programme. A preschool project – the Bokamoso Preschool Programme – has been established through the training programme. This includes mother-tongue community members being trained as preschool teachers; and communities being supported in establishing and running their own preschools. The point is to restore respect for age-old San childrearing values and methods to children's lives. But this is not by slavish adherence to traditional beliefs and practices but by adaptation to current realities, values and methods that modern education theories are rediscovering. One of the most challenging areas of this programme is, however, to make San people realise the value of what they have always had. Many choose modern education as the preferable option for their children and are suspicious that efforts to re-introduce traditional knowledge, or even mother-tongue education, are ways to 'keep us behind'.

There is a long way to go and the situation of the San people is indeed sad, if one considers their progressive educational practices of the past (Heckler, 1999). However, there is no turning back for the San people. The pre-conditions for the ideal principles of San education do not exist anymore; and modern life has taken its toll on the once important role of the father in childrearing. It has also become crucial for San people to acquire literacy and other gifts of modern education, and they have no choice but to adapt to the demands of modern economy and political conditions.

One cannot help but regret how much richer the world would have been if the San had been allowed to educate us all on how to integrate the principles of acquiring knowledge into the wider realms of our daily lives, instead of separating education from daily life.

May the practitioners and policy makers in education of the future allow us to learn from the San, and better still, allow and assist the San to integrate their old customs with modern education, and show us how the task can be divided among all members of our society, including the fathers, grandfathers and uncles! ○

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An extensive bibliography that is also relevant to the subject matter of this article is included in: *Torn apart: San children as change agents in a process of acculturation*, by Willemien le Roux (see note 4 below)

More information about the Kuru Development Trust is available from http://kalaharipeoples.org/documents/Kuru-san

notes

1. The word 'San' is used as an interim term to describe all the groups. It was accepted by the WIMSA Annual General Assembly in 1997.

2. WIMSA stands for the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa, a regionally represented networking organisation with its head office in Windhoek, Namibia. More information is available from http://www.san.org.za/wimsa

3. 'Basarwa' (in Botswana) or 'Bushman' are examples of some of the names used for these people. They actually prefer to call themselves by the name of their own language groups – for example: Ju'/hoansi, !Xóo or Naro.

4. Le Roux W (1999) *Torn apart: San children as change agents in a process of acculturation*; WIMSA, Namibia

5. Le Roux W (1999) *op cit*

Botswana: *At a traditional dance*
photo: Willemien Le Roux, Kuru Development Trust

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Helping fathers find their roles:

an exercise from Southern Africa

Margaret Irvine

This contribution has been reprinted from Early childhood education: a training manual *by Margaret Irvine, published in 1999 by the Bernard van Leer Foundation/UNESCO (http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/publish).* *The manual grew out of training events conducted within the 'Early childhood joint training initiative' in Africa, conducted by the Foundation, UNICEF, UNESCO and Save the Children USA. The initiative aimed to train cadres of trainers who, in their turn, would train early childhood practitioners.*

All the activities described in Early childhood education: a training manual *were tested over a period of three years at international level within the Joint Training Initiative, at country level with national early childhood trainers, and with early childhood practitioners at family and programme level. This extract covers an exercise with fathers to help them to understand and develop their childrearing roles. It was adapted from an original training session with participants from Namibia.*

Objective

To identify effective ways to encourage fathers to be more involved in early childhood development.

Materials needed

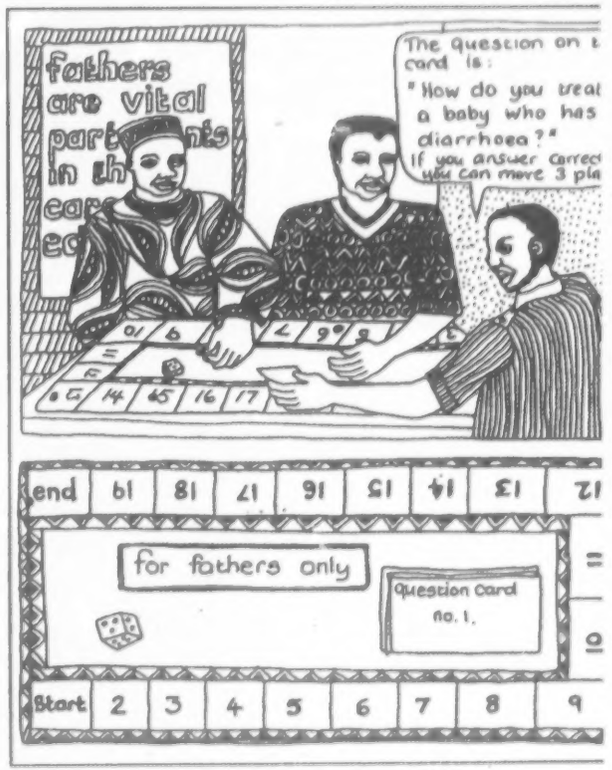
Group 1: paper and crayons;
Group 2: case study written on paper;
Group 3: case study written on paper;
Group 4: written instructions for a drama to act out;
Group 5: board game (see instructions for making and playing); flip-chart, paper and pens.

Methods used

- group work of different kinds;
- plenary discussion.

Steps

1. The facilitator introduces the topic and asks the participants to state briefly how they see fathers behaving towards their young children. Responses are written quickly on flip-chart paper.
2. Groups synthesise these comments into a statement of their experience of the opportunities and challenges facing them.
3. Participants form five groups and the facilitator gives each group an activity to do (see following five group activities).
4. Each group is asked to report back on the findings of their group, except for Group 4, which presents the drama to the group and the questions for discussion after all the other reports back have been made.
5. All the presentations are recorded by the groups and, after all presentations have been made, a general discussion is opened and a synthesis of the learning is made.



Watch points

1. This activity is especially designed for groups of fathers, but can be adapted for use with trainers.
2. Be aware of participants' cultural beliefs and customs and ensure that this sensitive subject is handled in a way that will lead to honest and supportive discussion.
3. Positive perceptions about behaviour can be used to discuss and possibly change negative perceptions about fathers' behaviour.

Key learning points on the role of fathers in early childhood development

1. The father is a very important figure in the life of the baby and young child, and there is a need for strong ties to be developed between them from an early age, together with the mother who is usually the central figure in the baby's early months.
2. Some interactions that do take place between fathers and young children include (in Africa for instance) the following:
   - fathers and other male relatives assist in socialising male children;

- grandfathers and older males transmit values and social mores;
- men teach young children relevant life skills such as the identification of cattle patterns, plants, landmarks, weather, etc;
- fathers and male relatives collect and relate folk tales, proverbs, family history, kinship and extended community relationships;
- men help to construct buildings and equipment, and help to produce learning materials.

3. Perceptions and beliefs about the role of the man and the father in the family and society can often prevent him taking a full and natural role in the upbringing of his young children: he may not only believe that young children are not his primary responsibility, but be supported in this belief by the women and mothers themselves.
4. Since babies and toddlers are seen as 'belonging to' their mothers and other women, fathers are perceived as distant figures even when living in the same home. Their task is to punish wrong-doing.
5. Some strategies that would recognise and reinforce the traditional role of the father while at the same time identifying and encouraging new mutually acceptable behaviour include:
   - enabling both men and women to be self-confident and assertive as individuals and as groups;
   - assisting in the formation of support groups;
   - appealing to men's self-concept as an integral part of the family unit;
   - actively involving parents and grandparents of both sexes in learning, teaching and ensuring that both sexes take on positions of responsibility;
   - encouraging men who are caring fathers and participants in family life to act as role models;
   - emphasising equality, cooperation and respect in the curriculum.

   (Source: Bernard van Leer Newsletter, No. 65, January 1992)

Group activities

Group 1: A Poster
What is the most important message you as a father can give to another father?
Make a poster to illustrate the message in a way most likely to attract fathers.

Group 2: Women's work!
If tomorrow all the women in your community disappeared, how would you, as a man, run your household and look after the children? What would you do?
Make a list of the activities you would need to do from the morning to the evening.

Group 3: Problem-solving
If you were a pregnant woman, what do you think your needs would be? Make a list of the things you would need to do to ensure a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Group 4: A drama: 'The pregnant mother'
The group prepares to act out the following script for the participants:
'A pregnant mother is working non-stop, fetching water, cooking, taking care of the other small children, cleaning. The father is sitting chatting with some other men, reading and drinking (at one point he takes a nap). When he needs anything, he asks the pregnant mother. She brings everything to him, and continues with her work. As soon as she wants to rest, someone calls and demands something from her. The father calls for his dinner. The woman looks extremely tired.'

Questions to ask the participants are:
- What do you see happening here?
- Why do you think it is happening?
- What are the effects when this happens in your environment?
- What can we do about it?

Group 5: A board game 'For fathers only'
Make a board with twenty blocks marked 1 to 20.
Block 1 is also marked 'Start' and block 20 is marked 'Finish'.
Each block can be decorated with a picture of fathers and children.

Make twenty cards with a question about childrearing practice on each, for example:
- If you had a choice of giving any of the three following foods to your child, which would you choose and why? Chips, eggs, fizzy drink, meat, sweets, bread, milk, porridge.
- Name one thing you can do to protect your child from disease.
- What is the most important thing to give your child if he or she has diarrhoea?
- At what age do you think that children start to learn and to use their brains?
- Can you think of another way other than beating to discipline your child?
- What do you think children gain from playing?
- In what ways can you assist your pregnant wife?
- As a father, what are some ways in which you can support your child's growth and development?

Rules for playing the game
Each person takes a turn to roll the dice and pick up a card.
If the answer is correct according to the members of the group, you can move forward according to the number on the dice.
If, according to the group, your answer is wrong, you remain where you are. The first person to reach the 'finish block' wins.

Winning photograph of the
2000 Poster Competition

A picture by Angela Ernst of Warao children on the banks of the Orinoco river in Venezuela. This is a very inhospitable area where health facilities, schools and means of transport are limited. The infant mortality rate is high. Despite all these adversities the picture conveys an image of cheerfulness, solidarity and resilience.

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

Investing in the development of young children

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is a private foundation based in The Netherlands. It operates internationally.

The Foundation aims to enhance opportunities for children 0-7 years growing up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage, with the objective of developing their potential to the greatest extent possible. The Foundation concentrates on children 0-7 years because research findings have demonstrated that interventions in the early years of childhood are most effective in yielding lasting benefits to children and society.

The Foundation accomplishes its objective through two interconnected strategies:

- a grant making programme in selected countries aimed at developing culturally and contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood care and development;
- the sharing of knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that primarily draws on the experiences generated by the projects that the Foundation supports, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Foundation currently supports a total of approximately 150 projects in 40 selected countries worldwide, both developing and industrialised. Projects are implemented by project partner organisations that may be governmental or non-governmental. The lessons learned as well as the knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development, which are generated through these projects, are shared through a publications programme.

The Foundation was established in 1949. Its income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958.

Early Childhood Matters

the bulletin of the Bernard van Leer Foundation

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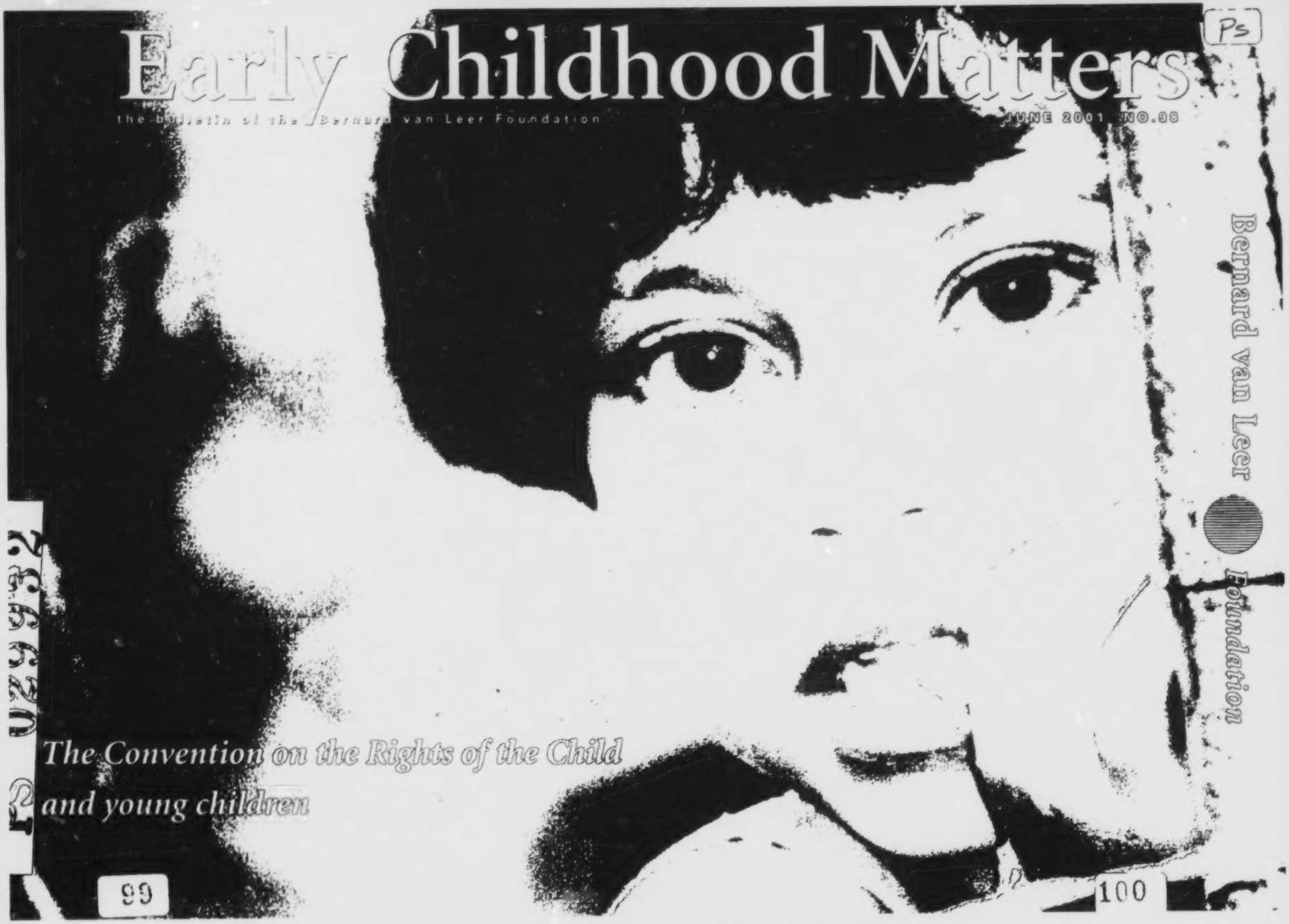

Bernard van Leer Foundation

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and young children

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As well as *Early Childhood Matters* the Foundation produces a wide range of publications about early childhood development. All are available - free of charge for single copies - to organisations or individuals interested in this field. A publications list is also available: please contact the Foundation at the addresses above and on the back cover.

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The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and young children

Built on varied legal systems and cultural traditions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere – without discrimination – have: the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care, education and legal, civil and social services. These standards are benchmarks against which progress can be assessed. States that are party to the Convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions and policies in the light of the best interests of the child.
(UNICEF www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm)

The CRC does not contain a dedicated section that addresses the rights of children from birth to eight specifically. Rather it encompasses the rights of all children, up to the age of 18, or whatever age a State designates for the entry into adult status. Yet the world's young children (aged zero to eight years) demand special attention: they are the most vulnerable and therefore most in need of the benefits and protection that the States Parties that have ratified the CRC guarantee. In addition, children's earliest experiences have the most potential to influence them and their families, communities and societies – for good or ill – in later life. If, therefore, they can grow within the kind of secure development environment that the CRC implies for them; and if, as they grow they can come to understand how the CRC has contributed to their safety, well-being and development; their early experiences will travel in and with them, thereby helping the letter and the spirit of the CRC to permeate their societies.

The United Nations Special Session on Children on 19-21 September 2001 in New York, provides an unmissable opportunity to review the CRC with young children in mind. This meeting will bring together government leaders, heads of state, NGOs, children's advocates and young people. Its general purpose is to review the agenda for implementation set at the World Summit for Children in 1990, to move children's rights up the world agenda and to make a renewed commitment and pledge for specific actions in the coming decade. The Special Session is also expected to produce a global agenda for children and young people containing goals and action plans to ensure the best possible start in life for children; a good-quality basic education for children; and the opportunities for all children, especially young people, for meaningful participation in their countries. However, given the obvious importance of early childhood to the CRC (and *vice versa*), the Special Session must do more: it must directly address three key areas related to early childhood:

1. it must build up its currently limited focus on the rights of the youngest

> *The concluding article is a discussion of work in Australia that helped children to reveal their ideas about their rights through art.*

children so as to provide a platform for rights-based early childhood programming;

2. it must recognise and promote the work that has been developed to ensure that the CRC does indeed impact significantly on the youngest children; and
3. it must map out what still has to be done.

In doing so, it can readily draw on the fact that, throughout its text, the CRC espouses the values and principles which underlie good ECD practice: that children are whole individuals with multiple potentials; that children grow into their rights and responsibilities gradually, through processes of physical, mental, and social development that are their birthrights; and that young children have the right to be active participants in their culture and society.

This edition of *Early Childhood Matters* provides arguments, examples of work at all levels, and analyses to contribute to the discussions that are needed to elevate the CRC to its rightful place in ECD programming – and indeed to justify ECD programming as a key strategy in realising the aspirations of the CRC. In the first part, Feny de los Angeles-Bautista leads an exploration of the inextricably intertwined relationship between the Convention and early childhood development as a field (page 8). This is countered by Robert Myers' discussion of the shortcomings of the CRC from an early childhood perspective (page 22). To show that even now documents associated with the CRC do not sufficiently deal with early childhood, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG) then critically considers 'A World Fit For Children'. This is the Outcome Document that has been prepared by the Global Movement for Children, for the UN Special Session on Children. The CG suggests additions to several sections of the document. (page 26).

The first part concludes with a contribution from Dr Sham Sunder Ads (page 30) that explores the complexities of national legislation that attempts to support children's rights in India. The article is based on painstaking, detailed and diligent work to bring out the strengths and weaknesses of current laws, and to show what more must be done.

The second part of this edition is about practice: what can be done by those engaged in work with young children and their families and communities. It starts with a survey of the principles that underlie good practice in early childhood work that integrates the aims and spirit of the CRC. Caroline Arnold (page 36) demands that early childhood programming is based on a holistic understanding of early childhood development. Her article introduces a study of good practice derived from these principles: parents supporting their children's holistic development through encouraging participation in the normalities of day to day family life (page 40).

The edition concludes with three articles that show how the CRC can systematically influence early childhood practice. In Venezuela, CECODAP has a long record of successfully developing processes to enable children to come together, explore and discuss matters that concern them, and go on to develop activities that allow their voices to be heard and their actions to make a difference. The article that starts on page 45 discusses the CECODAP-initiated democratic mechanisms that led to the

Venezuela. *Children demonstrating for their rights*
photo: Pacomin project

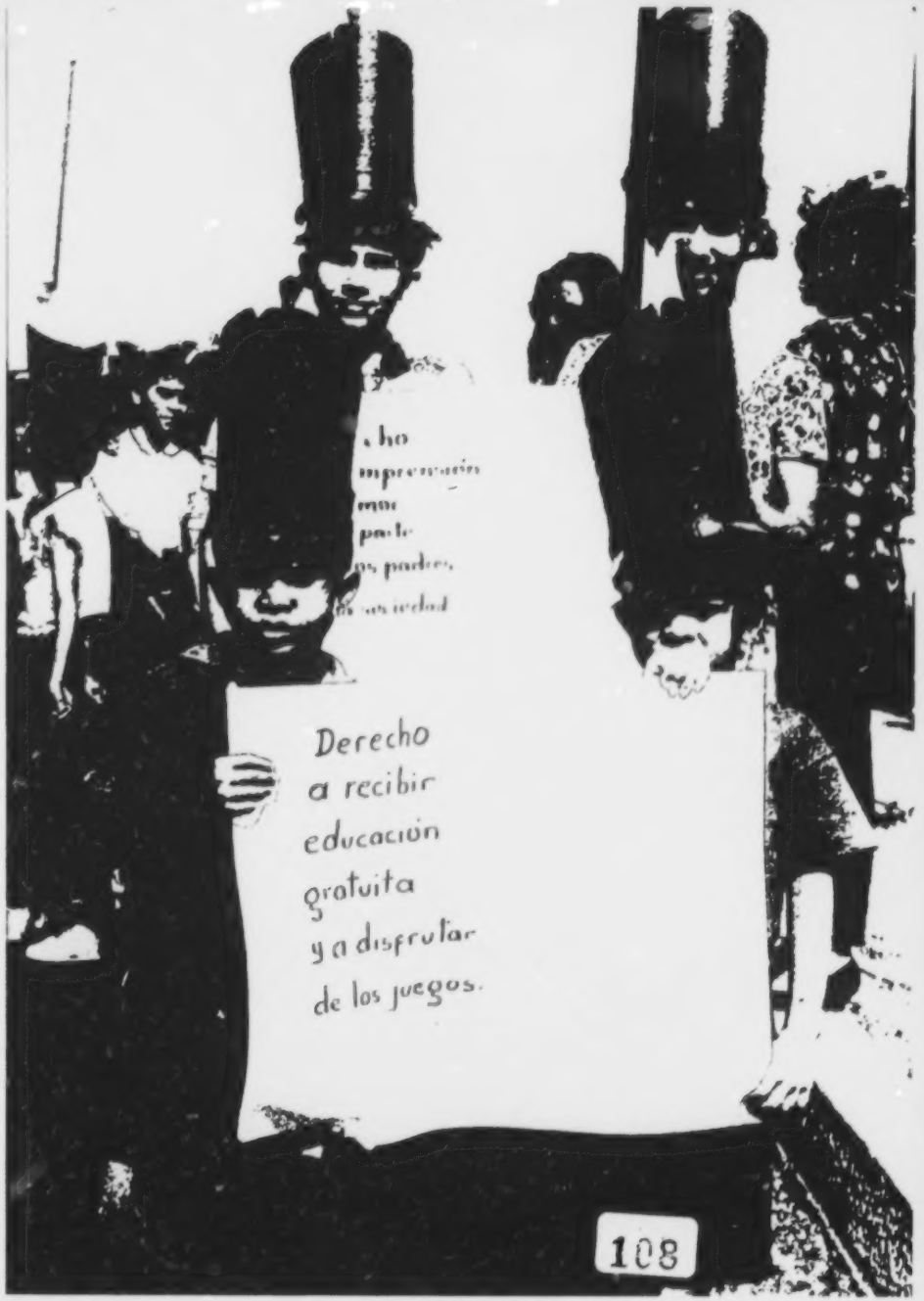
establishment of children's organisations and shows how these organisations impacted directly on the drafting of new legislation about child rights in their country.

From Zimbabwe comes a selection of practical exercises for children that introduce them to their rights and help them to promote them. (page 50) The selection is drawn from *We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe*, that was produced for UNICEF by the African Community Publishing and Development Trust by working participatively with about 500 children aged from 3 to 18 years. The book generally aims to encourage and motivate them to promote children's rights in Zimbabwe.

The concluding article (page 52) is a discussion of work in Australia that helped children to reveal their ideas about their rights through art. The work covered both the joyful and the sober sides of children's perceptions – and sometimes more significantly – their realities; and it produced some potent and graphic images. The article concludes with a set of five practical lessons from the work.

Each edition of *Early Childhood Matters* is a collaborative effort in that it depends on authors producing the articles and then on a small team in the Foundation bringing everything together. This edition needed more because of the scope of its theme. Unusually therefore, the work of the authors has been assembled, moderated and complemented by a kind of informal editorial group that included Feny de los Angeles-Bautista and Ellen Ilfeld, as well as the usual in-house team. ❍

Jim Smale, Editor



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The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the mechanisms for its implementation

The 54 articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) created in 1989 spell out basic human rights for children: the rights to survive, to develop to their fullest potential, to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation, and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. In addition, the CRC spells out how these rights are to be enforced by setting standards for implementation, reporting mechanisms for States Parties that are signatories to the treaty, and by articulating the principles upon which National Policies, legal frameworks, and Plans of Action shall be based.

The full text of the CRC is on UNICEF's website (see above) and can be read on the Early Childhood Counts CDROM (document name gn1crcxi.pdf) created by the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care (CG) and Development, in collaboration with The World Bank Institute and produced in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Christian Children's Fund, UNICEF and UNESCO. The CDROM can be obtained from The Secretariat, The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development: infor@ecdgroup.com; or through the CG website: www.ecdgroup.com

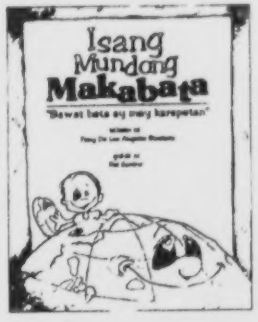
Committee on the Rights of the Child

Myers (1995)[1] notes that one mechanism created within the Convention to reinforce promises made by signatories is the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Article 43). As part of their commitment upon signing the document, countries agree to report to this United Nations Committee on their activities related to the Convention within two years after signing the Convention and again every five years thereafter (Article 44).

He reminds us that the Committee has established a format and a process for national reporting. According to the Convention, reports 'shall indicate factors and difficulties, if any, affecting the degree of fulfilment of the obligations under the present Convention'. The resulting national reports, which are supposed to be in the public domain in each country (Article 44, Section 6), are presented to the Committee which then comments on the reports, raising questions and making suggestions for further improvements. Every two years, the Committee reports to the UN General Assembly. This process has in some cases stimulated additional action and/or led to useful public debate in the respective countries about the rights and welfare of children.

Summary records are prepared for all public and some private meetings of the Committee. The Initial and Periodic Reports of States Parties, Concluding Observations of the Committee and other records and reports on the Committee's sessions are available through:
Secretariat to the Committee on the Rights of the Child
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Room D.205, Palais des Nations,
8-14 Avenue de la Paix,
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland;
www.unhchr.ch

World Summit for Children and National Plans of Action



In September 1990, the first World Summit for Children was hosted by

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UNICEF and attended by 71 heads of state and government and 88 senior officials. The purpose of this Summit was to create greater shared understanding of the CRC. At the conclusion of the World Summit for Children, a worldwide Plan of Action was adopted, obligating those who attended to create national plans for the decade of the 1990s. The World Summit Plan of Action sets out 25 specific goals, based on provisions of the Convention. National Plans or Programmes of Action (NPAs) are, in many cases, linked to this worldwide Plan of Action, rather than directly to the broader wording of the CRC itself. Most of the participating nations in the Summit and the signatories to the Convention have now formulated NPAs for children, and, in some cases, the NPAs have been decentralised and Local Programmes of Action (LPAs) have been formulated.

A ten year follow on Summit for Children (The Special Session on Children), is being convened in UN Headquarters in New York, in September 2001, to update the worldwide Plan of Action and examine global progress in implementing the CRC.

NGO Activities

Myers[2] also reminds us that another development fostered by the Convention has been the appearance of activities explicitly intended to further adherence to the provisions of the Convention, that are being carried out by new national, regional and international groupings of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Some of these activities are educational, promotional, or service actions by NGOs intended to reinforce particular rights and to directly improve living conditions affecting the welfare of children. Other activities are focused on sharing information and on monitoring the process of complying with the Convention.

These mechanisms include international networks such as the Children's Rights Information Network, regional networks such as the Latin American Regional Collective to Help Follow Up the Convention, and national groups (such as the 13 national groups of NGOs participating in the Latin American Regional Collective or the Philippine NGO Coalition for Monitoring the UN CRC). In some cases, these NGO groups also provide information to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. Some of the national NGO groups have produced parallel reports (to those of the government) on the status of children in their countries and others have cooperated with the government in producing a joint report. The Committee uses this information when interpreting governmental reports and in formulating questions and suggestions to governments.

In addition, The Global Movement for Children, instituted in 1999, is an international bringing together of UN Agencies, NGOs, donor organisations and youth to promote a more general awareness of the CRC and children's rights (see page 26).

notes

1. Myers R (1995) 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child: moving promises to action' *Coordinator's Notebook No. 17;* The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

2. Myers R, *op cit*

Every child has the right to a home and a family that love and take care of them. from: *A child friendly world;* UNICEF/Philippine Children's Television Foundation

Rights from the start:

ECD and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Feny de los Angeles-Bautista

The ECD community and the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human rights instrument; it is undoubtedly also the most widely accepted framework for action in favour of young children. There is an undeniable commitment on the part of the international community to use the provisions of the Convention as an agenda for action. It guides international efforts to identify the persisting life conditions that put very young children at risk and pre-empt their healthy and optimum growth and development. The Convention can be used to actively promote the quality of care – through policies and practices – that young children need and are entitled to as a part of their basic human rights. It offers child advocates, such as those of us in the ECD community, and States Parties the opportunity to define a truly forward looking and proactive strategy to promote and protect the rights of all children.

The fact is that we have an international treaty that integrates the civil, political, economic and social rights of children – young children included. However, eleven years after the ratification of the Convention and ten years after the World Summit for Children, we in the ECD community continue to face some big challenges. Young children are too often excluded, and their particular conditions and needs are invisible within discussions of this international treaty. The challenge is to make the most of the opportunities offered by the CRC, to inform and mobilise all those who are responsible for young children's care and for ensuring their development, including policy makers. Whether in rich or poor countries the ECD community must continue to remind governments, as States Parties, about their obligations to young children: *'... The options before leaders who are striving to do what's best for children and best for their country seem obvious: assure that every child, without exception, is registered at birth and starts life safe from violence, with adequate nutrition, clean water, proper sanitation, primary health care and cognitive and psychosocial stimulation, or fail their moral and legal obligations as set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child' (Carol Bellamy, The State of the World's Children 2001* UNICEF)

We must, therefore, ensure that national and local policies translate into concrete and sustained commitments for young children, and that there are sufficient resources allocated for quality ECD programmes and services.

To meet this challenge, we face the continuing need to educate all stakeholders about the importance of ECD, and the benefits of quality early childhood experiences, not only to the child, the caregiver and the family, but also to the community and society.

Our task is to make a clear link between 'the responsibility of all States Parties to implement the Convention for the full protection and promotion of the rights of all children' and ECD within our local and national settings. The link is this: protecting children's rights can only be accomplished by providing quality holistic attention from the start.

In essence, the Convention on the Rights of the Child can be a very effective advocacy tool for young children and families. It encourages States Parties to introduce or revise domestic legislation in order to ensure affirmative action for those young

Preamble

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

The States Parties to the present Convention

Considering that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recognising that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Recalling that, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations has proclaimed that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance,

Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community,

Recognising that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding,

Considering that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

Bearing in mind that the need to extend particular care to the child has been stated in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 and in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (in particular in articles 23 and 24), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (in particular in article 10) and in the statutes and relevant instruments of specialised agencies and international organisations concerned with the welfare of children,

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 'the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth',

Recalling the provisions of the Declaration on Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules); and the Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict,

Recognising that, in all countries in the world, there are children living in exceptionally difficult conditions, and that such children need special consideration,

Taking due account of the importance of the traditions and cultural values of each people for the protection and harmonious development of the child,

Recognising the importance of international cooperation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries,

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children in the greatest need and those who live in vulnerable conditions. The monitoring mechanisms and reporting requirements offer many opportunities to clarify how the goals, objectives and programming strategies in ECD relate to the articles of the Convention. Targets set out in National Plans of Action (NPAs) that are a requirement of the CRC for implementation of the Convention at country level can allow those of us within the early childhood community to advocate for more comprehensive and clearly articulated National goals for ECD. It is imperative that we monitor these National Plans of Action and implementation targets to make sure young children do not disappear.

Linked to that advocacy process, we need to initiate information, education and communication (IEC) activities to generate more awareness and broader political support for ECD programmes at both national and local levels of government. We must keep the message present in the public eye: that harmonising domestic law and establishing enabling policies for improved access to quality ECD programmes are two of the most important requirements for States Parties in order to effectively fulfil their commitments as signatories to the Convention. Our message to policy makers: legislation and policies related to ECD can – and should – be a priority focus.

Through an ECD lens: understanding the Convention on the Rights of the Child

An international treaty can easily remain at the level of rhetoric and abstractions to which lip service is paid. After the lengthy debates leading to its drafting and the intense lobbying for its ratification, there is indeed a danger that it will simply gather dust and be forgotten, only to be pulled out and drawn upon when an extreme case calls for its use. But an international treaty can also be brought to life by those who care enough to use it and maximise its potential. By translating the principles and articles of the CRC into more concrete terms, we can all help to bring it a step closer to full implementation.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is one of those international treaties that was not only kept alive and as visible as possible, but that continues to be studied and interpreted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, human rights specialists and the global children's rights movement, with the goal of making it a reality for all the world's children.

An overview of the general principles and the specific Articles of the Convention that are directly related to early childhood care and development may assist us in our work of promoting and protecting the rights of young children and of educating all stakeholders about their rights.

General principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly emphasised that the Convention should be considered as a whole, and interpreted in an integrated manner that builds on the interrelationships among all the Articles, particularly Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12, which it has elevated to the status of general principles.

Non-discrimination: ensuring the rights of each child: Article 2

1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members.

The fundamental obligations of States Parties in relation to the rights outlined in the Convention – to 'respect and ensure' all the rights of all children without discrimination of any kind, are established in the first paragraph of Article 2, along with Articles 3(2) and 4. Article 2 addresses the topic of discrimination in relation to the enjoyment of rights, and it requires action against 'all forms of discrimination' beyond the issues raised by the Convention.

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The non-discrimination principle, however, does not pre-empt affirmative action for children. The Convention specifies that special attention needs to be given to the many (young) children who belong to vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. Poverty is clearly a major cause of discrimination that affects children in both rich and poor countries. The Committee has emphasised that implementing this Article must 'not be made dependent on resource and budgetary constraints'. When governments cut down on public spending, resources for public ECD programmes, which are primarily the more accessible services for children from disadvantaged communities, usually fall victim, unless there is a clear political commitment to ECD.

Other articles of the Convention highlight the need to pay special attention to particular groups of children, in an effort to concretise the non-discrimination principle. These groups are often the ones that the ECD programmes in different countries have been trying to reach: children without families (Art. 20), refugee children (Art. 22), disabled children (Art. 23), children of indigenous communities (Art. 30), and children in situations of armed conflict (Art. 38).

In their best interests: Article 3

1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.
3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, and in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as competent supervision.

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[illegible] discourse on young children from [illegible] [illegible] needs, then arguing whether survival, health or education are more pressing needs, we are [illegible] challenged to think of the situation in terms of children's rights to survive and thrive as [illegible] human beings. And because the [illegible] states clearly that there is no hierarchy of rights (the [illegible] safety is not more important than the right to develop to one's full potential, for example) [illegible] in our work can help support arguments for [illegible] to children.

A Rights Perspective Compared to a Needs Perspective on ECCD

NEEDS PERSPECTIVE	RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE
Child is a passive recipient	Child is an active participant
Needs imply goals – including partial goals (eg. 90 percent of [illegible] should be [illegible])	Rights imply that all children (100 percent) should be served
Needs can be met without sustainability	Rights must be met with sustainability
Needs can be ranked in a hierarchy	Rights cannot be hierarchically ordered
Needs do not necessarily imply [illegible]	Rights [illegible] duties
Needs are associated with promises	Rights are associated with [illegible]
Needs may vary across cultures and settings	Rights are universal
Needs can be met through charity	Charity is not acceptable in a rights approach
Meeting needs often depends on political will	[illegible] rights depends on political choice

Source: Jonsson U. *A Rights [illegible] Needs Perspective* [illegible] Office for South Asia.

In essence, a Rights approach helps us get beyond the [illegible] of work with disadvantaged young children as charity work with needy beneficiaries [illegible] effort to create [illegible] [illegible] to participate.

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PROGRAMME STRATEGY	FOCUS OF THE INTERVENTION	OBJECTIVE	MODELS/APPROACHES
1. Deliver a service to children	the child 0-8	• ensure survival • promote health/nutrition • support comprehensive development • promote socialisation • develop rehabilitation services • create child care • encourage school achievement	• maternal/child health • home day care • centre-based programme • 'add on' centres • school (formal; non-formal) • distance education • comprehensive child development programme • religious school
2. Support/educate caregivers	• Parents/family members • caregivers • teachers/educators • siblings • elders and other community members	• create awareness • increase knowledge • change attitudes • improve/change practices • enhance skills	• home visiting • parent education courses • Child-to-Child • family life education • support networks for parents/caregivers
3. Promote child-centred community development	• community members • leaders/elders • community health workers • community organisers	• create awareness • mobilise for action • change conditions • take on ownership of programme	• social marketing • social mobilisation • technical mobilisation • literacy programmes • school curriculum • media
4. Strengthen national resources and capability	• programme personnel • supervisors • management staff • professionals • paraprofessionals • researchers	• increase knowledge • enhance skills • change behaviours • strengthen and sustain organisations • enhance local capability • increase local/national resources • develop local materials	• organisational development training • pre-and in- service training of caregivers teachers • experimental/demo projects • collaborative cross-national research projects • action research

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PROGRAMME STRATEGY	FOCUS OF THE INTERVENTION	OBJECTIVE	MODELS/APPROACHES
5. Strengthen demand and awareness	• policy makers • general public • professionals • media	• create awareness • build political will • increase demand • change attitudes • create an enabling environment	• social marketing • multi-media dissemination of knowledge • advocacy
6. Develop national child and family policies	• policy makers • families with young children • society, over time	• create awareness • assess current policy for families with young children • identity gaps • create supportive policy	• relate national to international efforts (EFA, CRC) • participatory policy development
7. Develop supportive legal and regulatory frameworks	• policy makers • legislators • families with young children • society, over time	• increase awareness of rights and resources • create supportive workplace • ensure quality child care • implement protective environmental standards • institute maternity/paternity leave	• create alliances (women's group, community groups, etc) • innovative public/private collaboration • tax incentives for private support of ECCD programmes
8. Strengthen international collaboration	• governments • donor agencies • bilateral agencies • foundations • international NGOs	• create international standards • share experience • distil and share knowledge • maximise resources • increase awareness • increase resources • maximise impact and effectiveness	• international conventions • Consultative Group on ECCD • international Vitamin A Consultative Group • international Working Group on Safe Motherhood • Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) • Save the Children Alliance

Source: Evans JL with Myers RG and Ilfeld EM (2000); *Early Childhood Counts: a Programming Guide on Early Childhood Care and Development;* The World Bank

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> *Article 6 clearly goes beyond the fundamental right to life, as it sets out the responsibility of States Parties to ensure survival and development 'to the maximum extent possible'*

Governments and civil society need to ensure that the best interests of children are always served and that children are prioritised. This is the emphasis of Article 3. Other major principles must be considered in determining the best interests of individual children, as well as of groups of children: non-discrimination, maximum survival and development and respect for the child's views.

Article 3 requires States Parties to assess the impact on children of the national political, social and economic conditions and government actions (or inaction). This means that mechanisms must be developed to effectively undertake this assessment. It also means that the results of these assessments can and should be used to develop policies for ECD. It is timely that selected countries have undertaken country case studies on ECD indicators within the context of the Global Thematic Review on ECD for the EFA 2000 Assessment.* These are important starting points for expanding and refining the bases for assessing impact on young children of government policies and programmes, and for assessing whether their best interests are served.

In countries where work on ECD indicators is being undertaken, it would be important to actively and proactively link these efforts to the overall monitoring and reporting systems for the UN Convention. Efforts to promote ECD indicators at a global and regional level will help tremendously for country-level monitoring and reporting on the UN Convention, since ECD indicators will account for a significant part of the required information.

States Parties are encouraged to adopt a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the Convention. A comprehensive approach is considered more effective and consistent with the provisions and general principles of the Convention. Within ECD, a tool which is available to us to promote as a comprehensive approach is the 'Complementary ECD Programming Strategies' promoted by the Consultative Group on ECCD, that has been adopted in many countries. These Complementary Programming Strategies help to clarify how such a comprehensive approach to implementing the Convention can be made to work for young children. It is a useful tool for States Parties to adopt.

For example, the ASEAN member nations have organised an ECCD Working Group consisting of inter-agency and multidisciplinary teams from the ASEAN member countries, and in October 2000 have adopted an ASEAN version of this framework for programming in ECCD in the region.

Quality ECD programmes have always been family focused, and in many communities living in especially difficult circumstances, ECD programmes have served as effective safety nets for families. Article 3 of the Convention encourages States Parties to provide families with support systems, especially when they are unable or unwilling to ensure the child's well-being. This Article provides a powerful argument for family-based ECD programming.

Implementing Article 3 also requires a review of policies and standards applied to child-focused institutions and services that include day care, health facilities and educational institutions working with young children. This provides a good justification for developing standards that are developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant for early childhood care institutions.

The right to survival and development: Article 6

1. States Parties recognise that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

This concept is considered crucial to the implementation of the whole Convention. Article 6 clearly goes beyond the fundamental right to life, as it sets out the responsibility of States Parties to ensure survival and development 'to the maximum extent possible'. A holistic concept of development has always been promoted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in the same way that the early childhood community has been the most consistent advocate for the total goal of development. In the *Guidelines for Periodic Reports*, the Committee on the Rights of the Child asks States Parties to describe measures taken 'to create an environment conducive to ensuring to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child, including physical, mental, spiritual, moral, psychological and social development in a manner

compatible with human dignity, and to prepare the child for an individual life in free society.'

Article 6 is not just about preparing a young child for later childhood, and older children for adulthood. It calls attention to children's current and emerging needs from the first year of life. This article should also be viewed in connection with the articles of the Convention (Articles 5 and 18), which emphasise not only the State's responsibility, but also the important role of parents and the family in promoting child development.

The right to be consulted, to be heard, to express themselves: Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Children's right to participation is seldom linked to the early childhood years. Some countries have reported that they set a minimum age on the right of the child to be heard, for example in custody proceedings following parents' separation or divorce. However, Article 12 does not set a lower age limit on children's rights to express their perspectives and needs. Furthermore, as the Committee and other children's rights experts have pointed out, it is clear that children do form their own views on various issues affecting their lives from a very early age. So the Convention offers no justification for the view that there is a lower age limit for considering children's perspectives.

We must clarify what it means to fulfil the provisions for ensuring young children's participation within the Convention, specifically in relation to ECD programmes. Too often participation is viewed as 'children voicing their opinions', something most often addressed in terms of older, verbal children. Further, there is sometimes outdated information about child development, particularly in regard to the capacity of young children to express themselves, to make sense of their world and their life experiences, that reinforces this notion that the rights related to participation do not apply to young children. But participation is larger than giving opinions. It has to do with everything a young child does from the beginning to construct an understanding of the world and to learn to act within developmentally appropriate social contexts. Those of us with expertise in understanding the sometimes non-verbal or verbally different expressions of children need to act as interpreters for people who would assert that young children can not and do not communicate their needs and interests.

Children's participation in decision-making in the family is emphasised within the Convention. The *Guidelines for Periodic Reports* seeks information on efforts to educate families, caregivers and professionals working with children and the public awareness raising efforts about the need to encourage children's participation and their right to express their views. The civil rights and freedoms of children within the family was a topic of one of the Committee's General Discussions (October 1994). One of the conclusions was that the 'family is the ideal framework for the first stage of the democratic experience for each and all of its individual members, including children'.

The foundation for children's participation within the family and community, within the groups to which he or she belongs, for example in playgroups, child care settings, and schools, is certainly established in the early childhood years through the quality of adult to child and child to child interaction that takes place in these settings.

The Convention provides a major breakthrough in reinforcing the view of young children as active rather than passive and dependent. This has always been the point of view of those working closely with young children, who can see for themselves how children are active participants in the various social contexts for their growth and development.

Articles about parents and families

The CRC and parents and families: Articles 5 and 18

Moving beyond those four Articles that have assumed the status of general principles, other Articles have enormous significance for the ECD community. For example, Articles 5 and 18 are directly about parents and families – the first foci for ECD programmes in seeking to support children's holistic development.

Mozambique: Conversas em Grande Roda project photos
Paula Nimpuno-Parente

Article 5 requires that States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for by local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the present Convention. Article 18 adds specificity:

1. States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents, or, as the case may be, legal guardians have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern.
2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their childrearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.
3. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from childcare services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Together, these two articles of the Convention provide a framework for the relationship between the child, parents, family and the State. In the preamble of the CRC (see page 9) and through these two articles, the Convention reiterates the importance of the family as the primary and 'natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members particularly children'. At the same time, the Convention clarifies that the child must be 'an active subject of rights' and emphasises the child's exercise of his or her human rights. This supports the view of children and childhood as necessarily visible, active and dynamic rather than invisible, passive and dependent.

There are two important concepts in defining this relationship introduced through Article 5 : the concept of 'parental responsibilities' and the 'evolving capacities of the child'. These concepts balance the role of family as caregiver and the child as an active human being who can exercise his or her rights as a member of the family, as a member of the community and as a citizen.

Article 18 addresses the balance of responsibilities between the child's parents and the State. Specifically, it highlights the need to support parents to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. While Article18 establishes the role of parents as primarily responsible for their children's care and development, other articles (5 and 30) define family in a flexible manner and acknowledge the role of community, ethnic group, or culture in the child's growth and development.

The Convention highlights the importance of parent education and the provision of support for parents to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities as caregivers and to respect and promote their children's rights. The *Guidelines for Periodic Reports* seeks information on parent education programmes, on counselling for parents about child development, and on the effectiveness of these interventions. Information is also

sought about ways in which 'the evolving capacities of the child' are communicated to parents and caregivers.

Some countries have provided information about parent education within ECD programmes in fulfilment of their responsibilities as States Parties. For example, the Indonesian government, in its Initial Report, highlighted the Bina Keluarga and Balita (BKB) project: 'to empower poor mothers and communities with knowledge and skills allowing them to interact with and provide mental stimulation for the very young child, that is, the zero to 3 year old child ... close to 1.3 million mothers in some 18,500 villages have been trained in the programme ...'. The report also mentioned that this ECD programme has been elevated to the status of a national movement by the government of Indonesia. (Indonesia, *Initial Report, vol. 2*, paragraphs 59 and 60)

The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its *Concluding Observations* following the submission of, and dialogues on Initial Reports from States Parties, has also stressed the continuing need for parent education (for example in Namibia, Philippines, Tunisia).

Some countries have reported on the difficulties faced by female headed families, for example Namibia: 'female headed households confront special problems in the area of childrearing. Women generally have unequal access to the limited opportunities for formal employment in Namibia, particularly because of continuing patterns of gender discrimination and partly because wage employment is concentrated in the urban areas ... The consequences for children are illustrated by the 1990 UNICEF survey, which found that children in households headed by women are more likely to be stunted in growth ... The survey showed that in Namibia, female headed households had particular problems breastfeeding – they often had to introduce solids at an early age, or give up breastfeeding altogether, because of the need to work ... Also, in female headed households, primary responsibility for the care of young children often falls upon older siblings or grandparents. This contributes to the school dropout rate for young girls, putting them at an educational disadvantage, which tends to help perpetuate women's unequal access to formal employment. (Namibia *Initial Report*, 140-1, 232-4)

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has also called attention to the need to provide government support for families in need through a variety of interventions, including community-based ECD programmes like child care centres, family day care, play groups, and toy libraries.

Article 18 specifies the need to support working parents. The provisions of Article 3 (3) were originally drafted specifically in reference to child care services to address the growing concerns about provision of child care for very young children that will respond to their developmental needs.

The Committee has encouraged countries to support ECD programmes, as in the case of Honduras and Jamaica, through their *Concluding Observations*: 'The Committee encourages the State Parties to support further measures to promote early childhood development and the provision of child care services and centres for working mothers'. (Jamaica, *Initial Report Concluding Observations*, paragraph 24).

Countries have reported on policies related to parental benefits as they relate to care for young children. For example, Italy reported on the recognition by their Constitutional Court of 'the right to take six months of leave, while keeping their post and receiving allowance equal to 30 percent of their pay, during the first year of the child's

life; the right to take time off when the child is sick, during the first three years; and the right to daily rest to care for the child during his first year of life (Italy, *Initial Report*, paragraph 94).

Finland reported on government support for parents: 'The State therefore contributes to the general maintenance costs of children, those incurred by the care of small children, disability, illness of a child, as well as to the housing cost of low income families. Finland has accepted that the State's responsibility for the care of small children should not be limited to day care provision for working parents. A new standard was reached in 1990 when parents with small children were given an absolute statutory right, according to their choice, either to municipal day care for their child or to home care allowance ... Under the current legislation, in 1995, a similar right will be extended to all children under the age of four' (Finland, *Initial Report*, paragraphs 423, 411).

Other Articles of special significance to the ECD community

In addition to the major principles and the articles that relate to parents and families, there are other articles of the Convention that are directly related to young children and thus to programming and policies in ECD. These include the following.

The rights of young children in relation to media: Article 17
Article 17 is focused on the role of mass media in relation to children's rights. It includes the obligation of States Parties to ensure that children have access to a diversity of information and material. This includes especially materials that will contribute to children's well-being and mental health and that support the aims of education, as set out in Article 29. Article 17 takes a proactive stance and encourages the production of children's books, promoting storytelling as a foundation for literacy, and promoting the development of media with a particular regard for the local and indigenous languages.

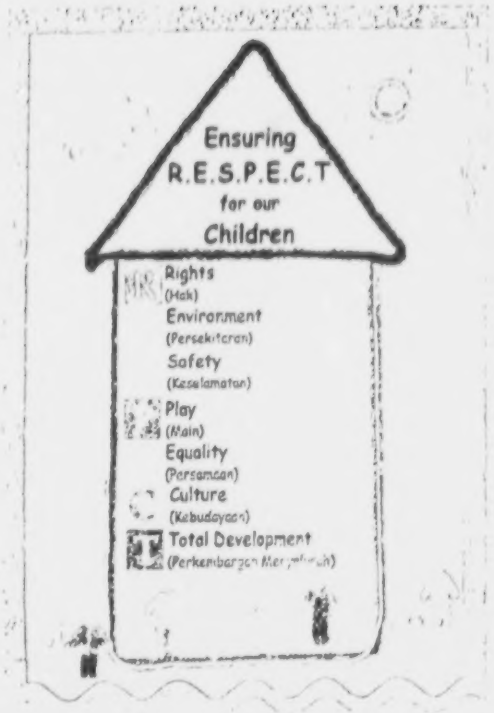
While encouraging access to media, Article 17 also emphasises the State's responsibility to protect children from the negative impact of violence in media and the presence of inappropriate content and visual images. Thus, Article 17 is especially relevant to supporting the development of young children as consumers and users of media, as well as protecting them from potentially harmful effects of media.

Article 17 is also related to children's right to freedom of expression and encourages access of children to various forms of media as a means to promote children's participation. Developmentally appropriate media products have been especially effective for facilitating young children's participation.

Children's media specialists developed the Children's Television Charter which is also anchored on the CRC. The Charter seeks to promote standards of quality for children's television that are consistent with the rights of children to various forms of media that are supportive of their development and their learning. This Charter was first widely endorsed at the First World Summit on Children and Television held in Melbourne, Australia in 1995. In 1996, at the Asian Summit on Children's Rights and the Media, governments, private broadcasters and non-government organisations affirmed their commitment to promoting children's rights to a child friendly media environment through the Asian Declaration on Child Rights and the Media. A follow up regional forum was convened in 2001 to assess progress made and reaffirm commitment to promoting children's rights in relation to Article 17.

The right to special protection: Article 19
This has been widely known as 'the special protection' clause of the Convention. Article 19 requires children's protection from 'all forms of physical or mental violence' while in the care of parents or others. States are required to initiate a variety of measures – legislative, administrative, social, educational – to protect children from all forms of abuse. These protective measures include the provision of appropriate support to children and families. Article 19 must also be viewed in relation to Articles 5 and 18, which address parental responsibilities and the provision of support for parents and Article 28, in relation to school discipline.

The Committee's *Guidelines for Reports* include a request for information on the 'educational and other measures adopted to promote positive and non-violent forms of discipline, care and treatment of the child; effective procedures for the establishment of



Philippines: PPSM (Association of Registered Childcare Providers Malaysia)
from: *Working with young children and families: a resource book*

social programmes to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of the child, including rehabilitation measures'.

ECD programmes are well-positioned to be designated as effective prevention programmes, especially because of the interactive and intensive working relationships established with parents. The 'timing' of ECD interventions also makes them suitable as a vehicle for prevention. It is a time when parents are generally most receptive to helpful information about child development, discipline, childcare, and so on. In the Philippines, the Comprehensive Programme for the Special Protection of Children includes ECD as the main prevention component for this national programme, jointly developed by the government and NGOs who comprise the Special Committee for the Protection of Children.

The right to be healthy and to health care: Article 24

Article 24 builds upon and develops the theme of 'right to life, to survival and development' set out in Article 6. Paragraph 2 of Article 6 provides a non-exclusive list of appropriate measures that States must take in pursuing full implementation of children's right to health care with emphasis on the development of primary health care.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child promotes the same broad definition of health that has been promoted by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF: 'a state of complete mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. This underscores the holistic nature of the Convention and its links to the broad definition of child development that is promoted by the Convention.

The *Guidelines for Periodic Reports* seeks information that is generally part of national ECD information databases: infant and child mortality, provision of necessary medical assistance and health care to all children with emphasis on primary health care; measures to combat disease and malnutrition; the proportion of children with low birth weight; the proportion of the population affected by malnutrition; prenatal and postnatal care for mothers; health education for parents and children; HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention.

Also significant for young children is that Article 24 (3) states that appropriate measures should be taken with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to health. Since many of these traditional practices often take place when the child is very young and unable to consent or resist, this is relevant to ECD programmes.

The right to an adequate standard of living: Article 27

Article 27 provides children with a right to an adequate standard of living for their full development. While parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that this right is fulfilled, States are enjoined to assist parents when needed. This article links two essential principles of the Convention: the child's right 'to development – to the maximum extent or to their fullest potential' (Articles 6 and 29); and the primary responsibility of parents in securing this right to development, which is reflected in paragraphs 2 and 4 of Article 27. What is important is the recognition that the child's life conditions definitely affect the fulfilment of the child's right to optimum development. Article 27 identifies the different components of development: physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social. This clarifies the fact that an adequate standard of living does not just refer to meeting the child's basic physical needs such as food, clothing and housing, but to the

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Philippines: PPBM (Association of Registered Childcare Providers Malaysia)
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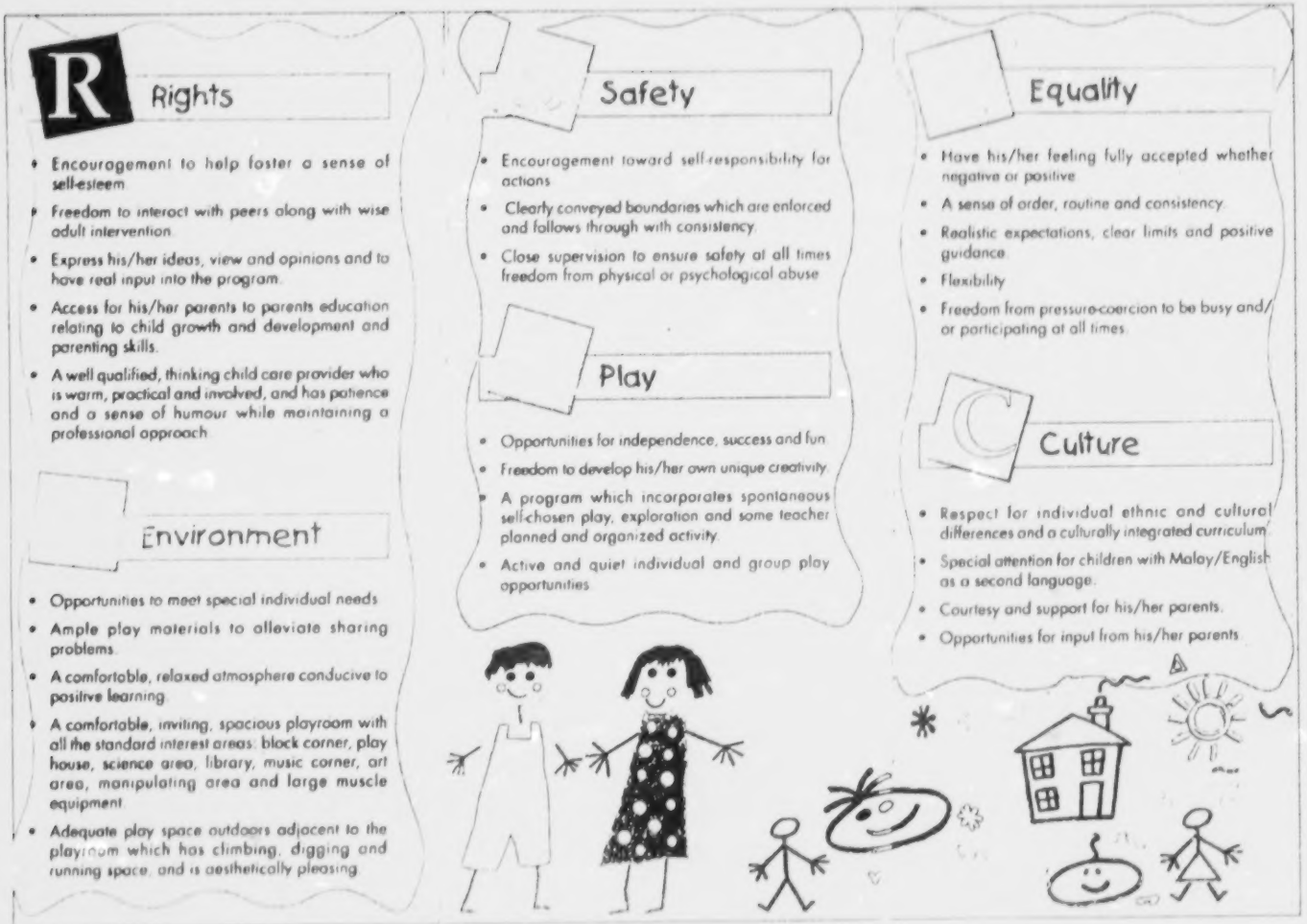
R
Rights
• Encouragement to help foster a sense of self-esteem.
• Freedom to interact with peers along with wise adult intervention.
• Express his/her ideas, view and opinions and to have real input into the program.
• Access for his/her parents to parents education relating to child growth and development and parenting skills.
• A well qualified, thinking child care provider who is warm, practical and involved, and has patience and a sense of humour while maintaining a professional approach.
Environment
• Opportunities to meet special individual needs.
• Ample play materials to alleviate sharing problems.
• A comfortable, relaxed atmosphere conducive to positive learning.
• A comfortable, inviting, spacious playroom with all the standard interest areas: block corner, play house, science area, library, music corner, art area, manipulating area and large muscle equipment.
• Adequate play space outdoors adjacent to the playroom which has climbing, digging and running space, and is aesthetically pleasing.
Safety
• Encouragement toward self-responsibility for actions.
• Clearly conveyed boundaries which are enforced and follows through with consistency.
• Close supervision to ensure safety at all times freedom from physical or psychological abuse.
Play
• Opportunities for independence, success and fun.
• Freedom to develop his/her own unique creativity.
• A program which incorporates spontaneous self-chosen play, exploration and some teacher planned and organized activity.
• Active and quiet individual and group play opportunities.
Equality
• Have his/her feeling fully accepted whether negative or positive.
• A sense of order, routine and consistency.
• Realistic expectations, clear limits and positive guidance.
• Flexibility.
• Freedom from pressure-coercion to be busy and/or participating at all times.
C
Culture
• Respect for individual ethnic and cultural differences and a culturally integrated curriculum.
• Special attention for children with Malay/English as a second language.
• Courtesy and support for his/her parents.
• Opportunities for input from his/her parents.

fact that children's cognitive, social and emotional needs must also be addressed.

In regard to Article 27, discussions convened by the Committee on the Rights of the Child have been maximised to highlight the concerns about the impact of structural adjustment policies in countries dependent on international aid. They highlight the impact of recession, and special challenges for so called transition economies, such as post communist Eastern Europe. Since these financial situations significantly affect public expenditures for children's programmes, it is an important issue to discuss in relation to public ECD programmes.

The right to education: Article 28

Article 28 establishes the child's right to education. The definition of 'education' is not limited to schooling, although subparagraph (e) on school dropouts and Article 29 (2) on private 'educational institutions' do suggest that this is generally the goal and the expectation. Article 28 does not explicitly refer to early childhood education, but the *Guidelines for Periodic Reports* asks for information on:

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'any system or extensive initiatives by the State to provide early development and education for young children, especially for young children from disadvantaged groups' (paragraph 106).

Some countries have reported on the significance of ECD programmes in relation to the implementation of Article 28: 'Various programmes have been initiated to provide equal opportunity to the girl child by reducing their work burden and providing better access to school and health facilities. These include: ... the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) project within the Education Programme which promotes home-based child care and parenting education, as well as community-based child care centres. Child development activities help reduce the childcare burden of older girls, allowing them to attend school' (Nepal *Initial Report*, paragraph 71).

Article 28 also calls upon States Parties to ensure regular attendance at schools and the reduction of dropout rates. So far, there are no examples of reference to ECD programmes in reports on school attendance, and the guidelines for reports do not ask countries to specify whether children have participated in ECD programmes. However, this would be valuable data to push for, since there is strong evidence available from research, regarding the benefits of quality ECD programmes, and the impact these can have on reducing dropout and school failure.

The right to play: Article 31

Article 31 sets out the child's right to play, which seems to be the most natural right. Yet there is a tendency to overlook its importance particularly in relation to ECD programming. For young children, play is a major life activity, a primary means for interacting, learning and communicating and thus for development. Play is essential to all children's lives at all ages, but especially for young children. The value of play in a child's life has been most emphasised by the early childhood community, both in its work with parents and in its discussions of the provision of care and education through more organised forms of ECD.

Conclusion

The ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has presented both challenges and new opportunities for the early childhood community. It has pushed us to clarify how the Articles and provisions apply to young children. It has pushed us to speak up in forums where the Convention is being discussed. It has pushed us to recognise the need to raise public awareness about the nature of, and the processes involved in early childhood care and development.

It is our job within the ECD community to keep young children on the international, national, and local agendas. We can maximise the potential of using the CRC as a vehicle for promoting ECD as a priority in both national and global agendas for children by doing the following.

- Interacting with States Parties in preparing, submitting and disseminating the initial and periodic reports and the Concluding Observations of the Committee.
- Actively monitoring the implementation of the Convention in regard to ECD.
- Participating in the creation of periodic national reports as well as independent NGO reports.
- Participating in dialogues with the States Parties and the members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These dialogues must centre on the assessment and implementation of recommendations for States Parties, and on further elucidation of the principles of the CRC in relation to ECD.
- Participating in local, national, and international dialogues about ensuring children's rights under the law (and ensuring young children's inclusion within that dialogue).
- Understanding how the legal frameworks, policies, practices and attitudes within our spheres of influence reflect (or fail to reflect) our countries' ratification of the CRC.

We in the ECD community must do all we can to transform the promises made through the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into concrete actions for all of the world's children – right from the start of their young lives.

* Prepared by Robert G Myers, The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, for UNICEF and for the EFA Forum, 26-28 April 2000, as a contribution to the EFA 2000 Assessment, February 2001

Moving promises to action: a critique of the CRC from an ECD perspective

Robert G Myers

*As the CRC was being reviewed and ratified, those in the early childhood field had high hopes that it would provide them with a legal basis for getting governments to devote more resources to programming for young children and their families. Many people turned to Robert Myers, a known spokesperson for the field as a whole. Thus, he undertook an analysis of the extent to which the CRC did – or did not – provide a strong basis for the creation of holistic ECD programmes. What follows is a critique of the CRC that highlights its lack of clarity in some areas, and suggests ways to remedy its inadequate treatment of early childhood care and development.**

Rights related to healthy child development do not seem to be set out with clarity in the Convention

Developmental rights are much less clear and concrete in the Convention, for instance, than rights to survival or rights related to protection. As an example, in Article 27, where an appropriately integral view of development is established in Section 1, development is then linked in Section 2 directly to providing 'conditions of living necessary for the child's development', and in Section 3 this is reduced more explicitly to providing 'material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing'.

The early childhood care and development (ECCD) community, I believe, would insist that development requires much more than nutrition, clothing and housing. No mention is made in this article of the Convention of psychosocial or educational conditions that should be provided to promote healthy development. Rather, these pieces of what might be considered a key dimension in the developmental rights of children are scattered throughout the document and are often handled in a negative way or a way that does not make clear the connection to healthy development.

In general, the Convention assigns primary responsibility for the 'upbringing and development of the child' to parents or legal guardians who are to act in 'the best interests of the child' (Article 18, Section 1).

However, as indicated above, governments are also assigned responsibilities for assisting parents and legal guardians in the performance of their childrearing responsibilities (Article 18, Section 2) and also for taking 'all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible' (Article 18, Section 3). Notwithstanding these provisions, as one looks at National Plans (or Programmes) of Actions (NPAs), attention by governments to child care institutions, facilities and services is frequently missing. Governments often seem to be content to leave the responsibility for childcare with parents.

Attention to preschool education does seem to be present in many NPAs. This is ironic because the Convention does not include preschooling or early learning in its treatment of a child's right to education. Although Article 29 states that the education of the child should be directed to 'the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential' (Article 28), that provides the context for this statement

treats education strictly in terms of schooling. Accordingly, the educational rights of children are specified in terms of primary, secondary, higher and vocational education (schooling).

Thus, the development referred to in Article 29 is that which occurs in school, and primary school is defined as the starting point. Learning and education associated with development during the earliest years (whether at home or in preschool settings) are left out of the educational rights of children. Instead, we are left to assume that this early learning is covered in other parts of the Convention, in relation to, for instance, childcare and childrearing (Article 18), various measures of protection (eg, freedom from abuse, Article 19), or in relation to children in special circumstances, including children with mental or physical disabilities (Article 23).

One reason this lack of clarity with respect to the right to education is disturbing is that most monitoring of the ECCD component of the Convention is being carried out in relation to the education sector, based on the interpretation given to the Convention at the Summit for Children.

A low priority was assigned to ECCD at the World Summit for Children

Another reason why ECCD may not be receiving its due as part of the follow up of the Convention is that a relatively low priority was assigned to ECCD as the provisions of the Convention were interpreted and translated into goals at the Summit for Children and in the resulting Plan of Action. The emphases given to particular areas in the worldwide Plan of Action are reflected in National Plans and in monitoring. More specifically, the Plan, set out at the Summit in September 1990, listed 26 objectives to be pursued, each related to an area of sectorial actions favouring the child. The grouping of these objectives by sector was as follows:

Health and education of women	4 objectives
Nutrition	8 objectives
Child health	6 objectives
Water and sanitation	3 objectives
Basic education	4 objectives
Children in difficult circumstances	1 objective

It is clear that actions related to all of these objectives have a bearing on the development of young children, but particularly on their physical development as problems are overcome related to protein-energy malnutrition, lack of micronutrients, diseases, etc. What is again weak, however, is recognition of the mental, social, moral and spiritual dimensions of development referred to in the Convention. The one (number 5) goal of the 25 listed that deals directly with child development is the first goal listed under education which states: 'Increase early childhood development activities, including appropriate low-cost interventions based in the family and in the community'. However, it is very general.

This goal goes beyond the Convention's treatment of *basic education* and does provide a basis for attention to early childhood development. The reader will note, however, that the goal is extremely general (as contrasted, for instance, with other goals such as 'elimination of illness caused by guinea worm by the year 2000', or 'reduction of 50 percent in deaths caused by diarrhoea in children under age 5'). The reader will also note the reference to low-cost interventions, a stipulation that is not deemed necessary when setting out other goals or proposed actions.

A further interpretation of the Convention and consolidation of priorities was made at the Summit by defining in the worldwide Plan of Action seven 'Principal Goals of Survival, Development and Protection'. The seven refer specifically to: 1) infant and child mortality; 2) maternal mortality; 3) malnutrition; 4) water and sanitation; 5) universal access to basic education; 6) illiteracy; and 7) protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. In this delimitation, basic education is made synonymous with primary schooling, thereby setting aside early childhood development from the *principal* goals. Here we see even more clearly how the Summit interpreted and gave priority to certain parts of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is important to note because National Programmes of Action have been formulated, in the main, with respect to the goals set out by the Summit rather than with respect to the broader conditions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As a result, many provisions of the Convention are not considered in National Plans, including such basic rights as the simple right of a child to a name (something that is not part of the legal fabric of many societies), the right not to be abused, or civic rights and the right to participation. And, in the process of following the seven general goals of the Summit, child development and care during the early years are virtually missing from some NPAs and the related monitoring process.

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ISSO MESMO! ASSIM MÔNICA!
A FUTURA MÃE, MESMO POBRE, DEVE TER TODO ATENDIMENTO MÉDICO QUE NECESSITE.
DO JEITO QUE CHUTA, VAI SER JOGADOR DE FUTEBOL!
-ASSIM COMO TODO APOIO ALIMENTAR
BUÁÁÁÁ!
O NENÉ TEM QUE TER TODAS AS CONDIÇÕES DE SER ALIMENTADO!
...MESMO SE A MÃE ESTIVER PRESA.

Brasil: 'A criança tem direitos assegurados antes mesmo de nascer' from: *A turma da mônica*. Prefeitura do Município de São Paulo

An emphasis on what can be measured

That ECCD is weak in the follow-up activities related to the Convention and in many NPAs may be due to the fact that an emphasis has been placed on quantitative indicators in planning and monitoring the Convention, for which there are agreed-upon measures that can be compared internationally. Whereas there is general agreement on certain indicators such as infant mortality, weight for age, or low birth weight, similar agreement does not now exist on how to measure the mental, social and emotional development of young children. And, given the cultural and social differences in the way in which child development is defined, it is difficult to insist on an internationally comparable measure for child development. There is a tendency to think that if something cannot be measured easily and compared internationally, it is not important, or even worse, that it does not exist. As one looks at NPAs and at reports of progress, the measurable indicator that seems to be used for early childhood care and development is a measure of the coverage of preschool programmes. If preschool coverage increases, the assumption is that there is progress toward improving child development. However, this institutional view, concentrating on coverage, does not tell us what is actually happening with respect to various dimensions of children's development. Also, even this apparently simple indicator is often distorted because only formal programmes of preschooling are included in the coverage figure, leaving out non-formal programmes and leaving out such initiatives as parental education. Similarly, because this monitoring occurs in relation to educational programmes, childcare institutions and services may be left out. Finally, the indicator is not comparable internationally because of the wide variation in the type and quality of the preschool programmes being offered in different settings. In brief, the quantitative measures being applied to monitor early childhood care and development within the framework of the Convention are, at best, very limited.

Some questions that must be asked

What I have presented above are thoughts and impressions that must be treated as hypotheses rather than facts when looking at a particular situation or National Programme of Action. As readers seek to verify these hypotheses and as they go about examining relationships between the Convention, the Summit, NPAs and specific actions in their respective countries, the following questions might be kept in mind.

1. How have the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child been translated into the National Plan or Programme of Action in your country? Has the attachment of NPAs to the outcome of the Summit led to reinterpreting the Convention, or to leaving out attention to some important rights? If so, what provisions of the Convention have been set aside in the process?
2. Has your country written reports to be presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child? If not, why not? If so:

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a. To what extent do the reports reflect a critical view of the situation of children and of progress toward fulfilment of the obligations under the Convention and to what extent do the reports simply present positive outcomes and plans?
b. Who has participated in the process of writing the reports and how has that affected them?
c. Is the information provided reliable?
d. Are national reports in the public domain? Have they been debated?

5. How has early childhood care and development been treated in your NPA, in monitoring and in reports? Are specific ECCD goals and objectives included? What are the indicators proposed for monitoring progress toward the goals? Are these adequate? Does monitoring concentrate on formal preschool education or are non-formal programmes and child care programmes also included?
4. Does the inability to quantify early childhood progress distort planning and prejudice important areas?

A challenge

Despite ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by most of the countries in the world, and despite the fact that *human development* and *quality of life* have been placed, in recent years, much more at the centre of the international development debate, child development has not yet become a natural and important part of that debate or of monitoring the developmental progress of nations. As suggested above, this failure is related at least in part to the failure to agree upon appropriate measures of what constitutes early childhood care and development.

This presents the ECCD community with a major challenge: to agree upon measures of early childhood development that can be used for monitoring the developmental progress of children at a national level. This means moving beyond measures of programme coverage. In facing this challenge, it will be important to accept and preserve differences in cultural definitions of early childhood development. This means that the indicators used will not be comparable internationally (or even, necessarily, applicable at national levels in such heterogeneous places as India). But such agreed-upon indicators can be useful for planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation at either national or local levels which, after all, are where initiatives are taking place and where effects are expected.

In facing this challenge it will also be important to respect the integrated nature of development. It would be unfortunate, for instance, to define development exclusively in terms of physical development or of mental development, leaving aside social and emotional development. This suggests the need for developmental profiles of children and the need for periodic measurement of the several dimensions to see how they are moving over time. Creating a profile of child development or of the status of children may be more a political than a technical question, requiring ways to get different parts of government and society to bring together in one place the various measures presently being applied to create the profile. It may also involve an even more difficult task of overcoming feuds within academic communities where various schools of thought defend at all cost their particular measures of child development. These potential obstacles notwithstanding, the goal is within our reach, as is being shown, for instance, in Jamaica where a process of monitoring the status of children has been agreed upon and is being tried out.

Let us accept the challenge of defining early childhood indicators that can be used to monitor children's development as our contribution to making the Convention on the Rights of the Child a living document. Let us promote solid planning and monitoring at national and local levels of child development programmes in the best interests of the child and of our respective societies. ❍

* This article has been taken from 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child: moving promises to action' *Coordinator's Notebook No. 17*, The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development

A response to the Global Movement for Children's
Rallying Call and Outcome Document 'A World Fit for Children'

Early childhood counts:

The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG)*

In preparation for the UN Special Session on Children, a statement was created by UN Agencies, NGOs, donor organisations and youth to reaffirm commitments made in the CRC. This is presented in 'A World Fit for Children'. The document can be found at www.gmfc.org. As the statement was being developed, many in the ECD community did not feel that the official text adequately reflected the issues and concerns of those working with young children and their families. Thus, under the leadership of the CG, a set of additional proposals was produced. These are introduced in this article, and presented as additions to the relevant points in 'A World Fit for Children'.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) is all that the name implies and more: it comprises all the essential supports a young child needs to survive and thrive in life, as well as the supports a family and community need to promote children's healthy development. This includes integrating health, nutrition, and intellectual stimulation, providing the opportunities for exploration and active learning, as well as providing the social and emotional care and nurturing children need in order to realise their human potential and to play an active role in their families and later in their communities. This holistic view of children's well-being, while by no means new, has been validated and encouraged by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It has only recently been understood that the basic need for food, healthcare and protection are not just needs but rights (implying duties and obligations) and that, in addition, the rights to affection, interaction, security, stimulation and opportunities for learning have been accepted as being just as fundamental. Children's rights are about the obligations of all adults to protect the best interests of children, and to create the conditions under which they can develop and thrive.

Research suggests that significant and critical brain development and development of intelligence occur before the age of seven. Moreover, during the first two years of life, most of the growth of brain cells occurs, accompanied by the structuring of neural connections in the brain. This process is influenced by a child's nutritional and health status and also by the kind of interaction a child develops with people and objects in the environment. It is highly dependent upon adequate nutrition, stimulation, and care. During these first years, the key brain pathways for lifelong capabilities are established (or not). Therefore, what happens to a child, and the opportunities provided to a child in the first years are crucial in determining lifelong outcomes. While there remains ongoing debate about the degree to which early disadvantages or trauma can be reversed later on, including targeted interventions that aim to ameliorate problems, it is clear that adequate

attention to the first months and years (including prenatally) of a child's life ensures the best possible start in life.

What is a World Fit for Children?

- It is a world where it is understood that development is continuous and that **learning begins at birth** for every child no matter what their circumstances or abilities.
- It is a world that recognises that the best possible start to life depends on the quality of earliest years of life and that this is the foundation on which future child development rests. Attention to early childhood care and the emotional, pyscho-social, cognitive, spiritual development as well as to the health, survival and primary education needs of children is critical to providing the foundation for lifelong learning, and active and productive participation in society.
- It is therefore a world in which those involved in the care, development and education of children are supported in their responsibilities.

We are therefore particularly concerned with the lack of reference to ECCD in the Global Movement for Children's Rallying Call and included as principles in the Outcome Document, 'A World Fit for Children'. As such we have added more prominent references to ECCD in Points 3, 7 and 10 of the Global Movement's Outcome Document. These are shown in bold below.

Point 3: Care for Every Child
All children must enjoy the highest attainable standard of health, especially through immunisation, good nutrition and diet, **holistic care (as critical to survival, growth and development), opportunities for play and stimulating activities,** clean water and adequate sanitation, proper housing and a safe and healthy environment.

The Global Movement Outcome Document, mentions care, but only as it relates exclusively to good health and survival. Care is critical to survival, growth and development. It needs to be understood that child development is not synonymous with child health, that survival and development are simultaneous and that development is not something that occurs after survival. At the same time that children struggle not to die, they struggle to develop mentally, socially and emotionally. Child survival is part of ECCD, but it is not the whole picture. Once a child has survived, the question must be asked: what is the quality of life for that child, and how can that child realise her/his potential? Children who are helped to survive, and then are basically ignored by their society until they reach school age, frequently develop serious health and mental deficits that may persist and which will generally impede their ability to participate productively in their society.

Thailand. A chance for children project. *Children from Bangkok slums are looked after by their grandmother* photo: Sritada Ketwong, Foundation for Slum Child Care

Our understanding of the two-way interactive relationship between psycho-social well-being and nutritional status and health has increased enormously in recent years. This synergism between different aspects of children's development means that holistic approaches are vital and need to address both children's physical and psycho-social well being.

In the absence of a more holistic human development/social justice framework, agencies often overemphasise the physical status of children, because, by its very nature, progress in the areas of children's psycho-social development is more complex to assess, whereas weight or completion of immunisation schedules are easier to measure. However, there is promising work in the development and use of ECCD indicators being undertaken by various groups including the CG (See *Coordinators' Notebook 24*, 2001) which explores the issue of measuring outcomes (or disabilities and delays) in supporting young children's overall development using a broader ' rights-based framework, giving due attention to all aspects of children's development and to what extent adults are meeting their obligations.

ECCD needs to be given its place – it needs to be stated as a goal in 'A World For Children' and reference should be made to programme activities that are not solely health related.

Point 7: Educate Every Child
All girls and boys must receive a compulsory, free primary education of good quality **and access to lifelong learning opportunities, beginning with the pre-primary years including non-formal ECCD activities in homes, communities, etc.**

Point 7 of the Global Movement document asks us to educate all children. However, the explanatory statement that follows in the document emphasises obligatory and free education. That statement obviously pertains to formal schooling and to primary schooling. But it does not make sense if applied to 'education' and 'development' during the earliest years, most of which occur in and around a child's home and community. If we believe that learning begins at birth as indicated in the Jomtien and Dakar Declarations related to Education for All, it is important to realise that basic education begins then too. What is more **basic** than a solid foundation for all later learning?

In supporting the **youngest children**, it is especially important to recognise that ECCD programmes play a crucial role in establishing basic education for all. Support for young children does not merely refer to establishing preschools or infant classes. It refers to all the activities and interventions that address the needs and rights of young children and help to strengthen the contexts in which they are embedded: the family, the community, and the physical, social, and economic environment.

Emphasis needs to be placed on developing and using approaches which recognise, respect and build on families' achievements and the very real constraints they face in supporting their children's overall development/learning and ensuring their rights. This is a very different way of thinking about education and basic educational strategies than is normally understood when discussing the needs of primary and secondary students.

A case in point: the only eccd goal and only two eccd-related strategies in the entire Outcome Document, 'A World Fit for Children' are included in the goal of 'Promoting Healthy Lives'. There is not one eccd-related goal or strategy under the broad goal of 'Providing Quality Education'. While one outcome of eccd programmes is that they can help children to be more successful in school, the early years are a crucial phase of human development and **not** merely preparation for later years.

While a focus on primary education is undoubtedly important, evidence strongly suggests that **eight is too late** to start paying attention to children's learning needs. By the time a child reaches school age, most key wiring, language abilities, physical capabilities and cognitive foundations have been set in place. It is also important for ECCD to be rooted in education because it is the psycho-social aspects of children's development which have the most significance for long-term social change and sustained realisation of children's rights. The psycho-social piece of ECCD is inevitably dealing with the sort of people we want our children to be and the kind of society we work towards – central to all of our work in education as a whole. The great strengths of quality ECCD programmes are their emphasis on developing children's understanding of their world and supporting the confidence, communication skills and flexibility they need to interact effectively with that world – dealing with real life changes, better able to obtain their rights and to be active, contributing members of society.

ECCD as a field has valuable experience to share, including effective strategies

for supporting young children in their development, supporting families, and what is of greatest interest to many primary level educators, helping to make schools readier for learners and learners readier for school. Furthermore, early childhood programmes can also benefit women and older siblings by freeing them from constant child care responsibility so they can learn and seek better employment and earnings.

Point 10: Fight poverty; invest in Children

Because children suffer the most from poverty, the fight against it must begin with them. This includes investing in social services that benefit the poorest children and their families, such as basic health care, **early childhood programmes** and primary education. At the same time, the well-being of children must be a priority objective of debt relief programmes, development assistance and government spending.

Point 10 lists only health care and primary education as solutions in the fight against poverty. By providing a 'fair start' to all children, it is possible to modify distressing socio-economic and gender-related inequities. The unhealthy conditions and stress associated with poverty are accompanied by inequalities in early development and learning. These inequalities help to maintain or magnify existing economic and social inequalities. In a vicious cycle, children from families with few resources often fall quickly and progressively behind their more advantaged peers in their mental development and their readiness for school and life, and that gap is then increasingly difficult to close.

In summary, it is critical that we pay proper attention to young children's issues as well as those affecting older children. International trends (for example: migration; nuclear families; girls and women's heavy workloads; increasing school enrolments; HIV/AIDS; globalisation and dependence on cash economies that threaten women's decision-making control and insecurity; and so on) affect every aspect of young children's lives.

ECCD as central to a child rights strategy ensures a proactive approach in reducing exploitation (rather than just being reactive) by building families' and communities' sense of engagement with their children's rights from an early age, thus increasing the supportiveness of the environments in which children are growing up and reducing the number of children who need protection or rehabilitation projects. At the same time we are strengthening the abilities of children to have a say in their own futures.

Zimbabwe: Kushanda Project
photo: Paula Nimpuno

It is essential that all who are involved in influencing the context in which children live, learn and grow – family members to international policy-makers – meet their obligations. This includes supporting the position of Early Childhood Care and Development in the Global Movement for Children's Rallying Call and the final version of the Outcome Document 'A World Fit for Children' because Early Childhood Counts. ○

note

*The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development is a consortium of networks, donor agencies, private foundations, NGOs and its Secretariat, all working to improve and promote programming, policy-making and research related to young children and their families in the Majority World. Website: www.ecdgroup.com

In defence of the child in India

Sham Sunder Ads

Dr Sham Sunder Ads is President of the Committee for Legal Aid to the Poor (CLAP). In July 1998 CLAP initiated the Foundation-supported 'In defence of the child' project. The overall aim of the project is to ensure that the legal process and system are responsive to children's needs; and one important goal is to sensitise and educate key players involved in implementing child-related laws and policies. This article discusses a fundamental piece of work carried out by CLAP: a study of how well India's Constitution and child-related laws support children in securing their rights and entitlements, as set out in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC). It also shows how this work identified areas of Indian law that needed attention; and shows how CLAP itself provided legal support to help bring about necessary changes.

> *"I wish you could realise that the destiny of our beloved land lies not in us, the parents, but in our children"*

This message from the Father of the Indian Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence, inspired our project 'In defence of the child'. The project focuses on children's rights, reinforcing their entitlements, and highlighting what is lacking. We organise campaigns to disseminate information about policies and legal provisions relating to childcare and development, and to raise public awareness on the importance of civil registration. We also conduct grassroots-level surveys of children living under difficult circumstances, using the findings as tools in our advocacy work. Finally, we provide legal aid for cases that are of public interest.

Our goals are:

- to sensitise NGOs, the media, law enforcement instruments and policy makers on children's rights and, particularly, on primary education as a fundamental right;
- to make civil registration less complex;
- to ensure that laws that violate children's rights are amended;
- to prepare a Draft Uniform Child Code for consideration by the government;
- to make local authorities, children, parents and civil society aware of the local government's role in the administration of childcare services and development;
- to take appropriate steps regarding the situation of children living in the most difficult circumstances; and
- to establish legal precedents through test cases in the courts.

One important element in our work has been to find out about provisions for children in the Constitution of India, and to examine the extent to which they

comply with the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child. A Task Force consisting of jurists and advocates, undertook to collect acts, rules and regulations relevant for infants and children. These were set up in a matrix that related each to the relevant element in the CRC, and notes were added for future study and guidance. This helped greatly in demystifying the legal provisions for non-experts. To add to the body of information included in the matrix, we also conducted surveys in seven communities about the kinds of legal action that can be taken for infants and children. All of the outcomes of our work have been translated into the language of the region that we work in so that it is easily accessible to everyone.

Indian laws and the CRC

We cannot include a discussion of all of our work in this short article. Instead, we have focused on some of the most basic principles of the CRC, including: ensuring that terms such as 'child' and 'children' are properly defined; that each child has citizenship; that laws against exploitation are in place; that education is guaranteed; and so on.

What is a 'child'

CRC: The definition of 'child' is every human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

India: Many different terms and definitions are used in one or other of Indian laws. These include: 'minor and major', 'infant' (0-8), 'children' (up to 14, in most cases), 'juveniles' (all minors: boys up to 16; girls up to 18), 'adolescent' (14-18) and 'youths' (includes adolescent and beyond for certain purposes). One specific mention of child is about those under 14 not being allowed to work in factories, mines or any other hazardous employment. This fulfils the provisions of CRC in respect of 'minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment'; and it is in line with an attempted uniformity in Indian law that aims to prohibit child labour.

CRC: It is recommended to establish a minimum age below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the Penal Law.
India: The Indian Penal Code has established this minimum age at seven or below. This is known as the age of innocence. The time between eight and twelve years is known as the age of immaturity of understanding.

'Child' versus 'children'

CRC: There is an emphasis on the child as a member of a group, organisation or community. 'Child' in the singular sense is more appropriate to ensure the right against exploitation. In several Articles, the term child is the focus of concern and is recommended to be so. In recommendations about reducing early deaths, the Convention also recommends using the terms 'infant mortality' (children under one year); and 'child mortality' (children aged two to five). The plural use of the term – children – is used in a few cases. These include the following:

- improving the living conditions of the children.
- Combating illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad.
- Ensuring the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of the children.
- Exchanging appropriate information in the field of preventive health care and of medical, psychological and functional treatment of disabled children.
- Ensuring that all segments of society, in particular the parents and children are informed and have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents.
- Taking all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.
- Preventing use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and psycho-tropic substances. Similarly, protecting children from the illicit use of narcotic drug and psycho-tropic substances.
- Developing measures to prevent exploitative use of children in prostitution and other unlawful practices.
- Developing measures to prevent exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.
- Preventing the adoption of, sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.

India: from *Care of children in disadvantaged conditions*, a research project by Alagappa University

- Developing measures for dealing with children without resorting to judicial proceedings, and so on.

India: In Indian law we found that, in general, the word 'children' implies that they have to be organised in groups, associations or communities or in some other way. The word 'child' appears but it is not clear that any distinctions are drawn between the two terms. In this it differs from the CRC. The principles of State policy towards children, as depicted in the Constitution, include the following.

- Positive discrimination in favour of children.
- Withdrawal/non-engagement of children in factories or mines, including hazardous occupations and processes or any other hazardous employment.
- Every child is a citizen and has the right to adequate means of livelihood without gender discrimination.
- Equal pay for equal work for children above 14 years, irrespective of gender.
- Children must not be forced by economic necessity to enter a vocation unsuited to their age, strength or state of health.
- Children should be able to develop healthily and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

- Free and compulsory education should be available to all children from birth to 14 years inclusive.
- Legal Aid should be available to children.

Birth and death

CRC: In Article Seven, the CRC declares that 'a child shall be registered immediately after birth'.

India: There are four different systems for registration of child birth: for children below 21 days; below one month but older than 21 days; above one month but below one year; and above one year. A large number of children end up not registered at all. The state of the world's children 2000 published by UNICEF, specifically mentions the importance of registration of birth for India, because India was one of those countries with fewer than 50 percent registration. UNICEF also pointed out that non-registration may increase the likelihood of children being denied access to basic services and miss out in health care and education.

Obtaining a name

CRC: Article Seven of the CRC also declares that a child 'shall have the right from birth to a name'.

India: Indian law permits as much as 14 years to register a child's name. In addition, traditions, customs and norms of some peoples – for example, the Bondas – mean that their children are not given a name until a certain time has elapsed after birth. Laws appear to be flexible enough to accommodate this.

Obtaining nationality/citizenship

CRC: In Article Seven, the CRC declares that a child 'shall have the right to acquire a nationality'.

India: The questions that we had to answer were about whether children legally have nationality in India; whether their citizenship can be established easily; and what documents they ought to have as evidence. Indian laws give citizenship to the children of Indian citizens. However, given the difficulties in registering births, the non-registration of births, and the long delays that can occur in registering names, the picture is not very satisfactory. Even when the birth of a child is registered, the Birth Registration form does not clearly state the child's nationality – and does not therefore provide evidence to show that the child is empowered as a citizen of India. CLAP is insisting that there must be some kind of document to testify that, after a live birth, a child is a national of India, and is accepted as a citizen. While this is a matter of right, it is also of great practical importance in childhood and throughout life: some aspects of Indian laws apply only to citizens and only proper documentation will ensure that children can enjoy all their rights and privileges.

Education

CRC: Article 28 says that, 'States Parties recognise the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular, make primary education compulsory and available free to all'.

India: In Article 45 of the Constitution, there is provision for free and compulsory education for all children until they reach the age of 14. Birth Registration forms show the education of mother and father. When a mother and father are illiterate, their children are identified as 'First Generation Learners' – that is, the first generation in their families to receive education. More than 50 percent of Indian citizens have not attended the basic level of education promised by the State; and we have found that, using the UNESCO definition, more than 90 percent of parents are functional illiterates. The children of such parents will not be able to get appropriate support for their education from their parents. In addition, a close analysis of early education shows that there are at least two streams. Those who are affluent and powerful are now opting for English-medium pre-primary education, nursery schools or Montessori schools for their children; poor people are resorting to the government-promoted lower primary school, where the medium used is Oriya. The division is very clear, as are its consequences.

Institutions, services and facilities

CRC: Articles 3 and 18, indicate that necessary institutions, services and facilities have to be ensured for children.

India: CLAP prepared a monograph showing the role of institutions in providing services and facilities, as set out in various Indian laws. This defined areas for action to ensure effective implementation of child related plans and programmes. Following on from this, CLAP provided legal support to

> *Nalini, a girl and Goutam, a boy obtained their registration certificates with CLAP's intervention – but only after 67 days and 65 days respectively. Does this constitute 'registration immediately after birth?' This is apparently legal but CLAP is pursuing this matter to ensure that the provisions of CRC are reasonably honoured.*

bring about change in the following:

a) Ensuring the registration of live births.
b) Ensuring provision for the maintenance and custody of children.
c) Bringing public interest group actions on behalf of children in similar situations. For instance, children approached CLAP to help their families resist eviction from government land, because this would greatly harm their education. CLAP was successful in having the evictions reviewed, thereby taking effective action in an area that is not normally linked directly to child rights.
d) Banning illegal advertisements for baby foods.
e) Establishing coordinated campaigning networks. For example, the Orrisa Forum for Crèche, and Child Care Services (FORCES) was formed in collaboration with National FORCES. Together, we are conducting the 'Child First' campaign on education and awareness building.
f) Coordinating action to ensure that disasters are responded to in line with legal requirements. For example, the Disaster Response Services and Advocacy Cell was formed in the wake of the Super Cyclone in Orissa, to ensure that the Orissa Relief Code was adhered to and functioned as it should.

For the future

Following the adoption of the CRC in 1989, the World Summit for Children, held in New York, established 27 Survival and Development goals for children to be realised by the year 2000. India is a signatory to these goals and – as required – approved a National Plan of Action for Children in line with them. The 27 Goals are as follows.

1. Reduction of infant and under-five child mortality rates by one third, or to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births, respectively, whichever is less.
2. Reduction of maternal mortality by half.
3. Reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among under five children by half or 1990 levels.
4. Universal access to safe drinking water.
5. Universal access to sanitary means of the disposal of excreta.
6. Universal access to basic education and achievement of primary education by at least 80 percent of primary school age children through formal schooling or non – formal education of comparable learning standard, with the emphasis on reducing the current disparities between boys and girls.
7. Reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age group to be determined by each country) to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy.
8. Provide improvement in the protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, and tackle the root causes leading to such situations.
9. Special attention to the health and nutrition of the female child and to pregnant and lactating women.
10. Access by all couples to information and services to prevent pregnancies that are too early, too closely spaced, too late or too many.
11. Access by all pregnant women to prenatal care, trained attendants during childbirth and referral facilities for high risk pregnancies and obstetric emergencies.
12. Reduction of the rate of low birth weight (less than 2.5 kilograms) to less than 10 percent.
13. Reduction of iron deficiency anaemia in women by one third of 1990 levels.
14. Virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders.
15. Virtual elimination of Vitamin A deficiency and its consequences, including blindness.
16. Empowerment of all women to exclusively breast feed their children for four to six months and to continue breast feeding with complementary food for up to two years of age or beyond.
17. Growth promotion and its regular monitoring to be institutionalised in all countries by the end of the nineties.
18. Dissemination of knowledge and supporting services to increase food production and ensure household food security.

India. Personal hygiene
from a photo story by
Gandhigram Rural Institute
Tamil Child to Child project

19. Global eradication of poliomyelitis by the year 2000.
20. Elimination of neonatal tetanus.
21. Reduction by 95 percent in measles deaths and reduction by 90 percent in measles cases compared to pre-immunisation levels by 1995 as a major step to the global eradication of measles.
22. Maintenance of high level of immunisation coverage (at least 90 percent of children under one year of age) against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, poliomyelitis, tuberculosis and against tetanus for women of childbearing age.
23. Reduction by 50 percent in the deaths due to diarrhoea in children under the age of five years, and 25 percent reduction in the diarrhoea incidence rate.
24. Reduction by one third in the deaths due to acute respiratory infections in children under five years.
25. Elimination of guinea worm disease (dracunculiasis).
26. Expansion of early childhood development activities, including appropriate low – cost family and community-based interventions.
27. Increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living, made available through all educational channels, including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communications and social action, with effectiveness measured in terms of behavioural change.

Ten years on, these goals, and the Government of India's National Plan of Action for Children, provide a reference against which to measure what has been achieved in terms of policy and its implementation, how well it has been achieved, and what remains to be done. India is far from alone in failing to conform with all of the provisions of CRC. But progress is being made and we have found that there are many ways to influence – and help improve – policies and laws for children because the CRC exists.

Early childhood development programmes and children's rights

Caroline Arnold

The author is Regional Child Development Adviser (Asia) for Save the Children (USA and Norway). In this article she asserts the centrality of children's rights – and therefore the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – to early childhood development (ECD) and its programming. She therefore argues strongly for holistic ECD programming and against focusing solely on basic education, a restriction that would eliminate much of the potential of ECD programmes to directly support the aims and spirit of the CRC. Her article also reflects on what else the ECD community could and should be doing to ensure that the CRC does indeed help to shape programming for young children. To provide a practical example of what rights oriented ECD programming can mean, she surveys a qualitative study that was carried out in four villages in Nepal to discover how parents contribute to ensuring that the rights of their children are met.

ECD – an essential component in any child rights strategy

ECD programmes are about influencing the contexts in which children are growing up, including their families, communities, and local institutions such as schools, health centres, and so on. They are also about influencing the policies that help to create these contexts, and addressing the issues which slow down and damage children's development. Overall, the point is to ensure that contexts are supportive of children's development so that they grow up healthy, well-nourished, protected from harm, with a sense of self-worth and identity, and enthusiasm and opportunities for learning; and that they learn to think for themselves, communicate effectively, get on with others, and play an active role in their families (and later their communities). Much of this relates directly to their rights. Indeed, it is true to say that ECD programmes are about children's rights and the obligations of the state and of all adults to protect the individual child and create the conditions in which all children can develop their potential.

This is quite different from a widely held perception of ECD as simply a piece of basic education (or which sometimes equates ECD only with preschools). ECD programmes are about opportunities for learning. But they are also about a far broader range of concerns. This holistic view of children's well-being, while by no means new, has been validated and encouraged by the CRC. The basic need for food, healthcare and protection has always been central to child-focused agencies' work and has been long embedded in government policies. It is only more recently that these have been understood not just as needs but as rights (implying duties and obligations); and also only recently that the rights to affection, interaction, security, stimulation and opportunities for learning have been accepted as being just as fundamental.

Within the child rights framework, ECD programmes are called upon to occupy the very position which the best of them have already assumed as a responsibility for many years. With the impetus of the Convention, this

Nepal: *Watering the plants*
photo: D. McKenzie

interpretation of the role of ECD is increasingly being taken on board by many agencies and governments. But clearly there are still serious gaps in understanding here, as is evidenced by the endless frustrations many of us have had with the preparations and documents for the United Nations Special Session on Children. At the time of writing (June 2001), there almost seems to have been a relentless watering down of references to supporting young children's overall development in successive documents. Attention to young children's overall development as capable, confident and caring people is minimal, and the only piece that receives appropriate attention is survival and good health.

This treatment of ECD is inconsistent with the priorities of any child rights agency, making it all the more imperative for the ECD community to think through how we can make our voice heard even more clearly in support for ECD as central to both education and to overall child rights strategies. The justification for this is based on two complementary perspectives:

- young children's rights must receive the same levels of attention as do those effecting older children. Too often agencies simply ignore this age group – which includes over one third of all children – or focus solely on survival. Yet international trends (migration, changes in nuclear families, heavy workloads of girls and women, increasing school enrolments, globalisation and dependence on the cash economy and resulting threats to women's decision-making control,

insecurity, and so on) affect every aspect of young children's lives. It can be done: a wide range of initiatives fall under the ECD umbrella - from working with families to changing systems that marginalise or exclude some children.

And there are proactive (rather than just reactive) approaches to helping to ensure young children's rights. Within these approaches, two essential components are:

- building families' and communities' sense of engagement with their children's rights from an early age, thus increasing the supportiveness of the environments in which children are growing up and reducing the number of children who need protection or rehabilitation projects; and

- strengthening children's own internal protection skills – building their confidence and capacity to have a say in their futures, so they are more able to assess situations, question, come up with alternatives, and so on.

Strengthening ECD programming for children's rights

To be effective, the unusually holistic nature of ECD programmes has to be protected from tendencies to play down the very aspects which have the most significance for a long-term shift in social norms for ensuring children's rights. Clearly children's health and nutrition are central concerns but so are the psycho-social aspects and these must not be neglected. This is because it is the psycho-social aspects of children's development that have the most significance for long-term social change and for the sustained realisation of children's rights. That means that ECD is inevitably dealing with the sort of people we want our children to become and the sort of society we work towards – something that is central to all of our work in education as a whole. In practical terms, the great strength of quality ECD programmes is their emphasis on developing children's understanding of their world, and supporting the confidence, communication skills and flexibility they need to interact effectively with that world. These are the capacities that have the greatest significance in enabling children, as they grow up, to deal with real life challenges; be better able to obtain their rights; and be active, contributing members of society – all of which are essential if we expect children to grow up able to contribute to major change in society.

The statements above obviously apply to the best of what we do to support children's development whatever age they are. But they have a special importance for young children: it is during the earliest years that our basic sense of ourselves and our relationship to the world is established. Patterns are established at this time that have far-reaching implications.

In addition, we have recently begun to understand the importance of the two-way, interactive relationship between nutritional status and health on the one hand, and psycho-social well-being on the other. This synergism between different aspects of children's development means that holistic approaches are vital – even where programmes are not concerned with the 'whole child' but, instead, have specific educational or physical goals. Of great importance here in ECD terms is the fact that the younger the child, the more difficult it is to differentiate between the relative importance of physiological and psychological factors.

Difficulties can arise in agencies where there are strong sectoral divisions rather than a more holistic rights-based approach. Experience in almost every agency confirms that educationalists always include a concern for children's health and nutrition when planning interventions for young children. On the other hand, health personnel do not always reciprocate, favouring a medical worldview rather than a human

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development/social justice framework. An over-emphasis on physical status can also happen because, by its very nature, progress in the area of children's psycho-social development is more complex to assess, whereas weight or completion of immunisation schedules are easy to measure. This issue of measuring achievements in supporting young children's overall development using a broader rights-based framework and giving due attention to all aspects of both children's development and how adults are meeting their obligations is an area where promising work is being undertaken under the auspices of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development.

Other difficulties in holding a holistic approach to ECD programming centre on an over-concern with school. This has two sides. The first is that learning begins at birth and that we learn faster during the earliest years than at any other time, and that most learning during the earliest years occurs in homes and should continue to do so. Early education is not expected to be delivered primarily in formal settings, nor is that necessary. Instead the emphasis has to be on approaches which recognise, respect and build on families' achievements. The need then is to recognise that families face very real constraints, and to ensure that they get the support that they and their communities need to strengthen their abilities to aid their children's overall development and ensure their rights.

The second side to an over-concern with school in ECD programmes is to do with what is perceived to be the right kind of preparation for achievement in the formal school system. Here there is often a tendency to take a mechanistic approach that relates to future academic success, and this is coupled with the erroneous idea that children are more or less passive recipients of knowledge. At its worst, it can mean that formal school approaches trickle down into and replace developmentally rich ECD approaches. Taking this line is to deny that young children are creative, proactive agents in their own learning who acquire, develop and use new skills readily and use them naturally in ways that enrich their own development. The need is to build on such attributes so that the child can develop fully, rather than crush the children or reduce them to mere tools in the realisation of inappropriately restricted objectives.

Conclusion

Until relatively recently, much of the discussion around children's rights tended to focus on legal frameworks, policy decisions and so on. This remains centrally important: the CRC is legally binding for States and it has ensured that appropriate attention has been paid to government policies and initiatives. However, we are increasingly aware of the necessity, within a rights perspective, to concern ourselves within all the contexts in which children live Quite simply, there are moral obligations to children that extend throughout societies that long preceded any treaty: children's rights are about the obligations of all adults to protect the best interests of children, and to create the conditions under which they can develop and thrive.

The best of children's programmes worldwide are essentially an integrated set of actions for making a reality of children's rights. They are concerned with the whole child and support children's physical, intellectual, social and emotional development whether they are four months or fourteen years old. An interconnecting thread in the best of ECD programmes across different agencies is an emphasis on enhancing children's sense of self-worth and initiative, their opportunities for learning, their compassion, and their communication and problem-solving skills.

The CRC is not a rigid set of universal solutions. One of the great challenges for the ECD community is to enable families, teachers and peers to equip children for a rapidly changing world while retaining a sense of values and cultural identity. But, they also have to simultaneously help children to grow up healthy and able to deal with the challenges of their lives. A second challenge is to ensure that duty bearers at all levels (from family members to international policy-makers) meet their obligations. To do this, it will be vital to give far more attention to developing effective participatory methods for initiating discussion and dialogue on key children's issues, and on the interpretation and negotiation necessary for the internalisation of the Convention's core principles.

Bringing up children in a changing world:

Who's Right? Whose Rights? Conversations with families in Nepal

Bringing up children in a changing world: Who's Right? Whose Rights? Conversations with families in Nepal* *is a systematic description and analysis of how an indigenous culture raises its children. Perhaps uniquely, the childrearing study from which it is drawn was set in a child rights framework. The study took place in four villages in Nepal and was a joint initiative of the Save the Children Alliance; UNICEF; Seto Gurans National Child Development Services; City University of New York's Children's Environments Research Group; Tribhuvan University's Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development; BASE; NNSWA; Bal Bika Samaj Sudar Kendra; and SAC.*

The intent of the study was to highlight families' frontline roles in ensuring children's rights and that meant working closely with the families and proceeding with a clear understanding of their concerns. It was a qualitative study that looked at how families seek to ensure that their children grow up healthy, with enough to eat, and protected from harm; how families support their children's developing identities and their opportunities for learning; and how they encourage their capacity to get along with others and to participate in and contribute to their families and communities. In other words, all the areas of development which concern both early childhood and many broad-based development programmes, and in many of the areas that contribute to the establishing and upholding of children's rights. It was concerned with the beliefs and practices of families, considering their hopes and expectations for their children, as well as their concerns and frustrations and constraints. It also considered the different expectations that families have for their sons and daughters, and the effects that these expectations have on what they do with and for their children.

The study had three specific goals:

1. to encourage approaches to ECD programming that build on the strengths, traditions, achievements and resourcefulness of families and communities;
2. to develop effective participatory methods for initiating discussion and dialogue with parents and other caregivers on key issues for young children; and
3. to expand the shared knowledge base for stronger programming which can be responsive to both local values and rapid social change.

And it had a number of specific perspectives:

- it took a comprehensive look at children's lives in four villages;
- it highlighted families' frontline role in defending and managing children's rights;
- it highlighted families' perspectives and their achievements as well as constraints;
- it concerned itself with change and

how families deal with this;
- it used a highly participatory methodology – and an emphasis on developing methods for getting into genuinely collaborative dialogue with families and communities;
- it used a practical child rights framework for the analysis;
- it emphasised the importance of attention to, and action at, all levels as the broader social and economic realities are so important in shaping how families operate;
- it was concerned with the whole child; and
- it considered implications for overall policy and programme planning.

Given its goals and its areas of interest, the study naturally made use of approaches based on participatory learning and action (PLA), to which were added ethnographic interviews and observation. To make all of that possible, methods were developed to facilitate collaborative dialogue around key issues for children as the basis for joint planning. These methods are being compiled into a toolkit.

In terms of its relation to the CRC, the study was not constantly cross-referenced to CRC articles. Rather it held close to the spirit of the Convention and the ways in which most parents – all around the world – articulate their concerns for their children. In this, it reflected the CRC's clear support of the family as the 'fundamental group of society and natural environment for the growth and well-being of children' that 'should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community'.

Revelations from the study

The study revealed the vital contributions that ECD programmes make in ensuring that young children's rights are established from an early age, showing that they can be developed and supported by and through many of the everyday practices within the family and community. In this it highlights the fact that many child development programmes around the world fail to recognise and respect families' and communities' achievements and resourcefulness generally in raising their children. It also highlights the fact that many programmes are message driven and ignore or devalue what families are saying. Overall, the study confirms that family, community and culture are the heart of Nepal. Nepalese of all castes and ethnic groups have accumulated knowledge and developed a conventional wisdom as to what is best for their children. Of course, there are issues that need to be addressed – practices that may actually be harmful, for example. But tapping into the family and cultural stream in which children are nurtured is essential.

What emerged generally was that patterns of early care and the traits that parents continue to describe as ideals for their children are still those that are associated with a conservative agrarian life style: compliance, cooperation and respect. But that these are changing as a range of livelihood strategies are increasingly being drawn on to supplement traditional activities. Even so, many of these long-valued traits continue to be functional, and children gain many of the skills that will help them succeed in life. In addition, specific rights are reinforced – for example, an emphasis on cooperation in the community instils a sense of belonging; while respecting and learning from elders as the chief repositories of significant knowledge helps children to develop their sense of identity.

Everyday experiences with parents and the right to learn

The study shows that children's learning merges imperceptibly into the life-tasks and everyday events of village life; and that young children in all of the villages spend much of their day engrossed in various forms of play, something that most parents and other caregivers recognise as important for their development. It also makes clear that there is a richness of the environment even in the poorest homes that is often overlooked. Young children in these villages have:
- the experience of a stimulating social environment with multiple caregivers and peers, and the opportunity to interact with and learn from many different people;
- opportunities to interact with a wide variety of natural materials and to engage naturally in activities that formal ECD centres in affluent countries set up in special corners;
- the chance to learn through a wealth of daily activities, such as washing,

dressing, mealtimes, as well as involvement in work activities such as cooking, cleaning up, collecting water and animal food. Although curiosity, initiative, independent thinking and decision-making may not be explicitly valued in these villages in the same way that compliance and respect are, there is in fact much that supports these qualities in the everyday routines that children are part of.

The following examples illustrate some of the learning opportunities that parents developed in these environments.

Learning about different kinds of fish
Manno Chaudury, aged 22, is the mother of four. Her husband works as a labourer and returns home only briefly every few days. She was observed to have exceptional interaction with her children in spite of her very busy schedule, was very patient with her children and took a lot of interest in what they were doing.

One day she returned from fishing and the children ran to her excitedly, crying 'Mother has come! Mother has come!' They were all jumping up at her, except baby Suresh who was being carried by his seven-year-old sister Laxmi. Manno smiled at them and asked six-year-old Sunday to bring a large flat dish for the fish that she had just collected. She emptied out the fish and Sunday started sorting them out. He tried to keep the others away at first so he could see all the fish himself. But then Manno sat down next to the dish and all the other children sat around in a circle.

There were many fish of different types and four year old Dinesh looked at them with great interest and asked the names of each one. Manno told them one by one what they were and started to sort them out into piles – there were prawns, flat fish and crabs. The children helped her and discussed the size of the fish, and which ones they liked to eat most.

Two big crabs started moving and Dinesh backed away, frightened. Sunday said 'No need to be scared. It won't do anything. See!' He held up one of the crabs to show that it would not bite. Manno took four small crabs from the dish and said 'These are small ones – one each for you to play with'. The small crabs were moving and again Dinesh was scared. Manno said 'Look you can touch it', touched it herself and then took Dinesh's hand and touched it with him. Dinesh seemed quite confident so Sunday put a small crab on the palm of Dinesh's hand. The crab started moving and Dinesh laughed. The children played crab races and later ate one of the big crabs which Sunday helped Manno roast.

Infant learning. Dankumari's morning in Koldanda
Early in the morning nine month old Dankumari is being breastfed by her mother out on the porch. There are numerous breaks in the feeding as her mother talks and smiles at her, getting a laugh from the baby and laughing, talking in return. After the feeding she ties the baby to her back while she tends the animals. Dankumari is tied on quite loosely, so that she is able to pull herself over to the side and peer under her mother's arm, watching as she feeds the goats. Then when her mother squats to scrub a large copper pot, the baby's legs are able to reach the ground, and she flexes them up and down as she reaches for stones on the ground, and watches what her mother is doing.

Later, while her mother is away washing clothes, Dankumari sits on the porch on some rags, playing with a set of keys. Nearby in the yard, her father is weaving, with four-year-old Som by his side. When Dankumari is bored with the keys, Som passes her some coloured rags to play with. Various children, her own siblings and neighbours, take turns holding and amusing her. Indra, her 8-year-old brother, back from cutting fodder, and two neighbour children, put her in her hammock and play with her there, bouncing her while she laughs loudly. Her mother, passing by from fetching water, reminds them not to overexcite Dankumari. When the boys go back to work again, a small girl from next door takes over, standing the baby in the doorway where she can hold on to the threshold and move herself around. After a while, her mother picks her up and takes her into the house to clean her up, and then she sits on her father's lap while he takes a break from weaving.

Nepal: mother and child united
photo: D. McKenzie

Through these simple interactions Dankumari has the chance to learn a lot – about human relations and mutual exchange, and about language. In her activities she practises her physical skills, explores with her feet, hands and eyes, and manipulates objects, learning in the process about colour, shape and texture.

The joy of achieving

One day, while his mother was rolling out dough to make bread, three-year-old Suresh, as usual, sat very close to her. She gave him some dough to play with and Suresh made a long 'rope' using both his hands.

His mother asked what it was and he replied that it was a snake. She asked him to make another one and then told him to put it in the fire to cook. He did this very carefully and then asked his mother to make him a frog. She agreed that she would once she had finished making the bread. She took his 'snake' out of the fire and he ate it as soon as it was cool enough. While she made the frog she let Suresh use the board and rolling pin, to his great delight.
This is an excellent example of a busy mother managing her household chores while providing her son with some exciting learning opportunities, encouragement and a sense of achievement.

The chance to experiment

A five-year-old girl in Jahbahi was sitting with her mother, watching her make a basket. The mother went inside to the kitchen, so the little girl picked up the basket, took the needle out and started trying to weave it. Her mother came back and said, laughing 'Eh! You're spoiling my basket'. She then made a small basket base and said, 'First you put the needle like this, then this…', while showing her daughter what to do. Then gave it to her to try herself.

These examples show that some caregivers seem quite consciously to affirm and maximise the potential for active learning and problem solving. For other parents, it is a matter of becoming more aware of the advantages in an expanded repertoire for children, so that opportunities are more systematically supported. Generally, the study revealed that parents' primary

interest in teaching their children revolves around work skills. Girls are taught household tasks and boys outside work. In all communities they are encouraged to learn by doing. There is a recognition that children will make mistakes and that in fact they also learn through these. A small girl is encouraged to sweep by her mother even if she makes a mess of it. Children start helping pluck rice plants for transplanting before they can do it properly – all so that they will learn by doing. Most parents emphasise encouragement and reward as learning tools, although punishment for poor work was also observed.

Missed opportunities and constraints

There is a great deal of variation in the extent to which parents and other caregivers take advantage of everyday opportunities, either consciously or unconsciously.
Some parents were clear in their understanding of their role in helping children learn. Others do involve children in everyday chores. Still others may ignore a window of opportunity for teaching entirely, unaware of the value of what they have to offer.

Poverty often forces repetitive, routine behaviour with verbalisation reduced to a minimum. Curiosity, questioning, creativity, experimenting, discovering may well be discouraged.
However, parents respond with enthusiasm to discussion of the issue. They want support and advice and make it clear that they feel bewildered and inadequate in many ways. A good example is their sense that their children's shyness prevents them from making full use of their teachers or of people and opportunities from outside.

Workloads can result in children being left alone for long periods – especially during peak seasons.
Babies and young children may be left for long periods, or left in the care of four or five year olds. There are some opportunities for play and learning, but without the occasional intervention of a guiding adult these may end up being limiting for both the older and younger child.

Safe but frustrated.
Manisha, aged four years, had been left in her cradle (a piece of cloth tied between two poles by ropes). While her parents were out at work, she screamed continuously, but although the neighbours were nearby, nobody came to see what was happening. Her grandfather was in his workshop about 50 metres away. He was in the middle of his ironwork and could not leave it, although he could hear her screaming. He said 'She will cry and cry and then eventually she will get tired of crying, keep quiet and sleep'. He finally came to see her, when he came to get some food for himself. By that time she had fallen asleep again, so he went back to his work. She was left on her own for about 2 hours, restricted in her movement, unable to see beyond the end of her nose.

The connections between learning and overall health status may be a cause for concern.
Children are active learners, and can be effective in stimulating the interactions they require for learning. But the connections between children's interest in learning and their general health and nutritional status implies a particular responsibility on the part of parents.

Conclusions

The CRC recognises children's right to a standard of living adequate for their full development – physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social. It gives parents primary responsibility for ensuring this right, with all its implications for children's learning in different areas (Article 27). In addition it specifies children's right to formal education (Article 28), and identifies learning's basic aims: to develop children's full potential, to prepare them for responsible life in a free society, and to ensure respect for others and for the environment. Overall, *Bringing up children in a changing world: Who's Right? Whose Rights? Conversations with families in Nepal*, demonstrates how parents, in very practical and natural ways, can make the first of many of the most significant contributions to making these CRC aspirations real. ○

[*] Arnold C. Bartlett S. Hill J. Khatiwada and Sapkota P. *Bringing up children in a changing world: Who's Right? Whose Rights? Conversations with families in Nepal* (2000). Save the Children/UNICEF
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The participation of children in Venezuela: advances and challenges

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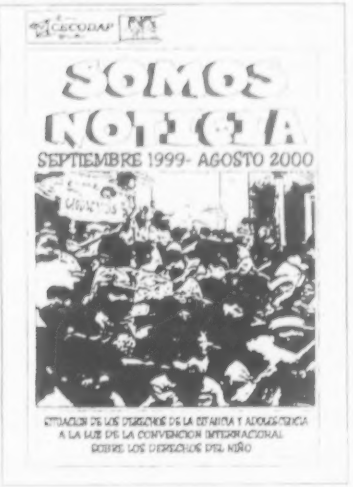
Venezuela: *Somos Noticia* periodical from CECODAP project



The participation of children in our society continues to be a challenge 11 years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its subsequent ratification by the majority of countries in the world. After more than a decade, we still have to ask ourselves how many more years have to pass before children attain their rightful place in society, properly recognised as a group of people who feel, think, act and must be taken into account. Here in Venezuela, even though there have been advances in incorporating the rights of children into law, the culture is still of repression and maltreatment. Marginalisation and exclusion are also obvious in their everyday lives – within many families, within schools, and within all of those spaces where they are denied opportunities to express their ideas, put together proposals and contribute to determining solutions to the problems that affect them.

The participation of children: an ethical perspective

Venezuela is in the middle of one of the worst crises that our country has suffered in recent years: the increase in poverty; unemployment; the break up of families; the loss of values; and so on. In these circumstances, it may seem paradoxical to talk about the participation of children. But, in such times, we have to include those who are most affected, otherwise the solutions that we come up with will only address some of the problems. Historically, slaves, women, black people and indigenous peoples have all been involved in the struggle for their rights, so why not children?

Alejandro Cusianovich, citing Crowley, says 'participation is the key right, the right facilitator ... to ensure the fulfilment of all other rights'. He affirms that 'it is not simply a way of reaching an end, nor just a process: it is a basic

Why promote the participation of children?

- to make public the experiences, views, opinions and ideas of children and young people, in defence of their rights;
- to bring children and adolescents directly into contact with those in authority to ensure that the proposals that they make are valued, supported and properly responded to;
- to develop an environment in which the rights of children and adolescents are respected and guaranteed in their totality by all;
- to offer opportunities for children and adolescents – representing in our case: educational institutions; ethnic groups; children in homes; child workers' centres; disabled young people, ecological, musical and sporting groups; children under eight years of age, and so on – to analyse, discuss together the problems that affect them and, especially, to make sure that their support for a society without violence is heard.

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civil and political right for all children and, because of this, is an end in itself'. In conclusion, he says 'Participation has to be respected not only as a goal but as a strategy to reach other goals'. In addition, it must be seen as a universal principle of socialisation and democratisation, as something that human beings need to strengthen their personality, their sense of belonging, and their responsibility for themselves and for others.

But the analyses that we have made in CECODAP show that children remain hidden, and that our society is accustomed to look at their problems through adult eyes. It does not put itself in their shoes and understand that they want to express opinions; and it does not recognise that they feel they have interesting ideas to contribute that count for as much as those of adults. So thousands of children remain muzzled while adults continue to marginalise and exclude them because they are convinced that they are incapable of participation, believing that they, the adults, know what is right and have the solutions to all the problems. This is neither efficient nor ethical, not is it true to the principles and spirit of the CRC.

Participation in national debates and decision-making

Obviously participation has to be progressive, in line with the stage of development that children have reached. From there, we in CECODAP believe that the need is to look in depth at the practical realities of children by working with them in their homes, in their schools, in their communities and in the places where decisions about them are taken. With this in mind, CECODAP, in collaboration with government and non-governmental organisations, has carried through a number of actions that allow children to show that they can participate as social actors. These actions include appropriate training programmes with and through teachers in the schools. Overall, our aim was to develop a new model of participation.

These actions resulted in the development of Children's and Adolescents' Parliaments (later called Regional and National Assemblies of Children and Juveniles); and the participation of children in the media. Participating children come from the popular sector, from schools, from care homes, from their work places, and from special and initial education centres. In the Parliaments/Assemblies, they express their opinions and experiences – for example, about problems that they are facing – and discuss and agree on proposals to bring about improvements. They also make a

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> *It occurs to us that the recognition of the child as the subject of rights and also as a social subject, should be given the same historical importance at the beginning of the 21st century as did, at their time and in their way, the movements to overcome slavery, racism and the marginalisation of women.* (Jaime Jesus Perez)

commitment to promote actions in their centres that will lead to planning with adults about matters that affect them there. A Directorate also maintains contacts with local authorities in order to contribute to policies on childhood. However, it is important to understand that these processes are in the initial stages – at least as far as adults are concerned: some respect the ideas that children and adolescents are bringing forward and incorporate them in their planning; some don't recognise that children can make important contributions; some are still learning to listen.

The first Children's and Adolescents' Parliament was held in 1995 and focused on how Venezuela's political realities measured up to the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The second was held in 1996 and delegates debated reform of the Tutoring of Minors law. Because of the delegates' abilities, processes were launched that resulted in the law being brought into line with the principles of the CRC. In 1997, the third Parliament had a date with the Congress of the Republic of Venezuela. Here delegates delivered their final observations on the proposed Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (now passed and in force) that was about to be discussed by the Venezuela Parliament. In 1998, the fourth Parliament reflected on 'The democracy we have and the democracy we want'. This was another demonstration that they saw themselves as subjects with rights and citizens who were making their contribution to society.

1999 saw many transformations in our country. Among these was the creation of a special body to reform Venezuela's National Constitution. The children and adolescents of the country needed to be heard so, from January 1999, they began to create Assemblies of Children and Juveniles to prepare opinions to express in the national debate. Their objective was to ensure that the rights proposed in the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents were actually incorporated in Venezuela's new National Constitution. In a national Children's and Juveniles' Constitutional Assembly that was drawn from the existing assemblies, constituents discussed and put together a body of proposals based on the CRC. They then brought this to the body that was drafting a new Constitution for Venezuela. In doing so, they built on the fact that Venezuela is one of the few countries that has changed its legislation in response to what the CRC requires (the Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents mentioned above). The input from the Constitutional Assembly helped to determine the wording in an article in the new National Constitution that is specifically for children and adolescents. The new article says in part:

Children and adolescents are full citizens as of right and will be protected by legislation, organs of state and specialised tribunals. These will all respect, guarantee and develop the contents of the Constitution, the law, the crc and other international treaties that have been accepted and ratified by the Republic of Venezuela. The State, families and society will assure, with absolute priority, total protection taking into account the overriding

Venezuela: *Derechos a mi medida*
CECODAP project
Photo: Soraya Medida

Three major challenges to participation

One of the largest challenges is the vertical nature of educational institutions and the education system generally. These are both based on power games where adults believe that they hold the truth and the solutions to all situations. The result is one way education in which students are passive and have few ideas to express their ideas, and where the long-term effect on students is frustration and desertion.

A second major challenge is the culture in which children – especially those under eight – remain objects taught by adults. They are seen as incapable and are therefore given few opportunities to express themselves, and this is especially true in the home where 'when adults are talking, children have to shut up'.

A third major challenge is to ensure that state institutions continue to open up spaces in which children and adolescents can participate and express their opinions on matters that are of interest to them. The need is to turn law into reality across the whole country – something that is made easier by the kinds of successes that this article has considered.

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Venezuela: *Derechos a mi medida*
CECODAP project
Photo: Soraya Medida

interest of children. The State will promote the progressive incorporation of children into citizenship and create a national system for the complete protection of children [...] Every person under eighteen is a subject with full rights that ensure their complete protection, paying due regard to their priorities and interests.

(National Constitution of the Republic of Venezuela, Article 78)

As well as having helped to ensure that they were established in law as full subjects who enjoy all the many rights of any other citizen, children and adolescents have also opened up public arenas that were reserved for adults just a short time ago.

The contribution of young children to debates and decision-making

Several children under eight were part of a group of children and adolescents that attended a meeting in the National Assembly to put forward their views and thereby influence the drafting of Article 78. One of these was David who, as the session was drawing to a close, insisted on speaking directly to the President of the body that was drafting the new Constitution:

Sir, remember that we are here to defend our rights; you must not forget anything that we have told you; you have to keep your promises.

He, like all the other children who participated in this children's movement, had enjoyed opportunities to express himself. He could also count on the support of adults close to him who had given him the confidence of knowing that his opinions would be heard and would be taken into account.

In some municipalities in Venezuela, preschool children (between five and eight years) have put together proposals about situations and realities that affect them. One major concern is violence of whatever sort, whether it occurs in their homes, in their schools, or in their communities.

Following discussions in small groups between themselves, they presented their ideas. In general, the authorities were surprised at the capacity of the children to express themselves. Just as important, they

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also realised that children were part of the solutions to the problems, rather than part of the problems.

But the authorities also felt that the opinions that the children put forward were simply the ideas of the adults who had worked with them. Of course there is a real danger that children can pick up the ideas of adults and repeat them. We are also very aware that young children can easily be manipulated, and can be made to say things in public that adults could not say. The answer is to keep both intention and process right.

Helping young children to participate

In their own ways, and in ways that are appropriate for their stage of development, young children are participating, especially in settings where they don't feel intimidated and where they see that their contributions are respected. The starting point is the places they normally frequent, the places in which they are becoming citizens with rights. Here, the teachers or leaders lay the foundations by acquiring respect for children and showing it, and by establishing an environment in which values such as solidarity, responsibility and cooperation are basic. At the same time, they provide the space and time necessary. Within that environment, adults can provide opportunities for children to express their opinions – for example, by showing that they agree or disagree with the adults.

From this base, activities can be planned that allow young children to interact with their surrounding realities and to become aware of the situations in which they live. In essence, activities are designed to enable children to reflect and to construct ideas with the maximum possible clarity. To do this, adults take a participative approach, using, for example, games that promote self-expression and creativity.

Two examples show what young children are capable of.

The President must talk with a man I know who has a lot of money so he can give a house to a child who is living on the street. (girl of five)

Why doesn't CECODAP tour the city and collect up all the children who live on the streets and put them in a big house?

But we, the adults, have to remember that these children are expressing themselves from their own understandings of the world, after – in their own ways – acting, understanding, conceptualising and coming up with proposals to counter problems that they feel. We may find their proposals absurd if we try to place them in the logical/social structure that we have already built to deal with the problem. But instead, we have to let them construct their own world. After all, aren't they telling us of a better world for children? Aren't they allowing us to see that world? Creativity and self-expression in all its forms – drawings, talking, acting, and so on – come naturally to young children and through them they can express to us what they are feeling and thinking, as long as we can ignore the stereotypical concepts that we often apply to what they tell us. What could happen if we allowed them to act as themselves and express themselves a little more, without imposing our prejudices?

The lesson we have learned is that we need to call a halt in the educational process that calls on teachers to simply teach; and we need to change our attitudes too. We actually like children to think, speak and act in ways that we feel are correct – and when they do not, it leaves us weak, unsettled and disordered. ○

We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe

Practical ways to introduce young children to their rights

This article consists of a selection of practical exercises for children that introduce them to their rights and help them to promote these. It is drawn from We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe, produced for UNICEF *by the African Community Publishing and Development Trust* (ACPDT) *through the community publishing process with about 500 children in Zimbabwe. In the community publishing process, learners develop their confidence, creativity and skills by assisting in the design of their own learning materials. Children/young people aged from 3 to 18 years contributed from all provinces of Zimbabwe.*

The purpose of the book is to inform, persuade and educate children and adults regarding the issue of children's rights, and in so doing encourage and motivate them to promote children's rights in Zimbabwe. It is essentially a practical manual for direct work with children and adults that includes many practical exercises. Although designed for children from 10 to 17 years, many of its approaches and ideas also seem useful for younger children too, perhaps in cooperation with older children and adults.

A companion publication called *A reference guide to the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) *and its implementation in Zimbabwe* is designed to be used in conjunction with *We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe*. More information about each is available from UNICEF.

I: Activities to introduce children to their rights and responsibilities

Girls, boys, dolls and puppets

1. Children collect materials suitable for making dolls or puppets, e.g. old socks, cloth, wool, string, wire, card, wood, seeds, dried leaves, etc.
2. Each child makes a doll or puppet.
3. Children display their dolls and puppets.
4. They discuss, with the help of an older child or adult, the following questions:
   - What is the difference between a child and a doll or puppet?
   - Why should children be treated differently from things?
   - How do children want to be treated:
     - by adults?
     - by other children?

Purpose of this activity

To help children understand that they are human beings – that is, active, thinking, creative people who should be treated with respect and who should treat others with respect.

Small is beautiful

1. Children hunt for beautiful, small objects, e.g. a coloured stone, a shell, a bead, a flower.
2. They make a display of what they have collected.
3. Then they make up a poem together, called 'small is beautiful' which should end with some lines about the beauty and value of children as small people.

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Purpose of this activity

To help them recognise their own value

Our pride in ourselves

1. Children divide into pairs (made up of friends).
2. Each pair is given crayons or chalk and a piece of paper or card, as large as a child. If paper is not available, find an old wall or floor where children can draw with chalk.
3. One child lies down on the paper, or against a wall, while the other child draws around him/her. Then they change roles.
4. Each child decorates his/her picture, to make it a self portrait (a picture of themselves), writes his/her name, and inside the drawing writes or draws the talents, abilities and achievements that the child is most proud of. If a child finds it difficult to list his/her talents and abilities, the friend can assist.
5. Then all the children look at a display of the big drawings they did, which show their pride in themselves.

Purpose of this activity

To increase children's confidence, and sense of their own value.

Secret admirer

1. Each child writes down his/her name on a small piece of paper, and then folds it.
2. The names (pieces of paper) are mixed in a hat or bag and each child takes a piece of paper, but does not show or tell anyone what name is on it.
3. Each child is instructed to become a secret admirer of the child named on the piece of paper. That means for a day, week or month (the children can decide for how long), the secret admirer quietly helps and encourages this special friend.
4. There's a discussion (at the end of the agreed period) about:
   - Who did you think your secret admirer was?
   - Did you enjoy being a secret admirer?
   - If we treat a person as a special friend, how will that person treat us?
   - Are there children in our area that we do not play with, who could become our special friends in the future if we treated them with affection and respect?

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to treat other children well, and to widen their circle of friends.

2: An activity to introduce children's right to development

Changing faces

1. Children are encouraged to collect waste materials suitable for making hats and masks.
2. They are asked to transform their faces by creating home made hats, masks and even beards and wigs so that it becomes impossible to recognise them.
3. Children invite other children and adults to see their display of 'changing faces', and they line up behind a curtain or wall, with only their decorated faces showing, to see if the audience can recognise who is who.
4. Later, they can make up plays and games using their hats and masks.

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to be more creative and play more imaginatively.

3: Activities to introduce children to their right to participation

Freeze

1. One lively child is chosen to lead the other children, out of doors.
2. The leader moves as strangely and unpredictably as possible e.g. marching, hopping, skipping, taking huge strides, dancing on tiptoe, and moving hands and arms in imaginative ways.
3. Children in the line try to follow the leader exactly.
4. Every now and again, the leader shouts "Freeze!" and the children have to stop moving immediately, keeping the position they were last in.
5. After about ten minutes, another child can take over as leader.
6. There is a discussion based on the following questions:
   - How did you enjoy the game?
   - To what extent do you children have to follow adults in everyday life?
   - When is it important to follow adults and obey them?
   - Should adults always be obeyed?
   - When is it important for children to think for themselves and make their own decisions?

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to be creative and play more imaginatively.

Chaos into order

Children run around outdoors playing 'catch'. If a child catches another, those two children have to hold hands as they run and try to catch other children. Eventually the lines of children who have caught each other and are holding hands gets bigger and when the last children catch each other and hold hands, a circle is formed. Children can dance in the circle and can make up or be led in songs about their rights.

There is a discussion covering:

- How did you enjoy the game?
- Why can an organised group of children achieve more than scattered individual children?
- How can we organise ourselves better as children to promote our rights?

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to organise in order to strengthen their position.

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Australia:
children explore their rights through art

Barbara Piscitelli & Felicity McArdle

The authors are from the School of Early Childhood, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology. *In this article, they discuss work that helped children to reveal their ideas about their rights through art. The work covered both the joyful and the sober sides of children's perceptions and – sometimes more significantly – their realities; and it produced some potent and graphic images. The article concludes with a set of five practical lessons that cover how to make the work possible with materials and resources that are available. But they also reveal what can happen when what children express is at odds with what some people and policy-makers want to hear.*

We are at the beginning of a new era in children's rights – one that promises to be exciting with an abundance of significant legal, administrative, bureaucratic and personal challenges. The topic of children's rights seems to challenge people and, in Australia as well as other countries, there has been a great deal of discussion and comment in the media, the government and the public arena. There are widely diverging views, some of which claim that 'children should be seen and not heard', an outdated maxim of a time before children's rights were protected – yet this sentiment is still held within communities around the world. At the other end of the scale, some people claim they have nothing to offer in the area of children's rights since they consider the human rights arena to be territory for lawyers and judges; they often remark that the area should be left to the experts. Increasingly, though, the children's rights movement has focussed attention on the urgent need to educate children, the community and the professions about children's rights and, in particular, to learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). If the new era of children's rights is to flourish, then a concentrated campaign of community awareness must take place. One major part of the community awareness and education campaign should focus on teaching children about their rights.

Inspired by the work of other small scale children's rights educational projects, a group of educators and artists formed a group in Australia in 1997 to learn how best to develop a way of teaching children about their rights.[1] Together, we visited four schools to talk with five to twelve year old children about their rights, and to encourage them to depict their views of their rights in drawings, paintings and murals. We found this a most invigorating and exhausting project; invigorating because we learned that children already know a great deal about their rights and exhausting because there is so little available in terms of resources and materials to teach about children's rights. Over the course of the project, we developed materials and activities that would encourage and support a rights perspective in classrooms (Piscitelli & McArdle, 1997). In a search to locate information on teaching about children's rights, we found some books and reference materials to assist us but, for the most part, adapted ideas to suit the interests and life experiences of the local children.

from Helping young children understand their rights by Joan Waters, OMEP, Australia.

From our philosophical standpoint as early childhood educators, we developed a way to introduce children to the topic of human rights. Our strategies included holding meetings with children to read stories and engage in large group conversations. We read the children's book, *For Every Child a Better World*,[2] and discussed different life situations for children around the world. The book opened the door for discussions and questions about health, education, families, working children, war and poverty. In smaller groups, we had more personal conversations, handled questions, and looked at photographs of children around the world. The photographs proved to be a good catalyst for more detailed dialogue about how their lives were similar or different to the children in the photographs. Following these conversations, we invited children to think about their rights, and to make a picture that showed one of their most valued rights. The older children also wrote poetry about their human rights as a group activity.

Children's views of their human right

In our project, children exposed their ideas about their human rights in potent and graphic images. From the joyful and exuberant messages about play to the more sobering images about war and violence, the children's drawings expressed deep emotions and pure desires. In many cases, the children made pictures to convey their sense that no child, anywhere, should have to suffer from any indignity. The exhibition was titled by one of the ten-year-old girls working on a group collaboration of a large mural.

She painted the words *Children Have Rights!* across the mural – leaving a strong verbal message about the fact that children already had rights. No-one could deny that. She and the other exhibitors spread their messages about human rights to thousands of people all over the world.

The arts seem to be a good vehicle for children to reveal their thoughts about their rights. In our project, we employed the arts as a vehicle for children's visualisation of their human rights. One of our team, visual artist Raquel Redmond, selected a range of art making experiences for children to convey their ideas: drawing, mural making, painting and collage. We scaled our choices for the relative age and experience of the children. The youngest children drew and painted, while older children used collage and print-making. The murals were painted by all ages. This wide and diverse range of art making provided us with a rich set of images for an exhibition of the children's views of their human rights.

We exhibited the children's ideas at the first Australasian conference on children's rights in Brisbane in 1997 – and received a very warm reception for bringing young children's ideas to the attention of the international conference delegates. The exhibition later toured throughout Queensland and Australia to be viewed by thousands of people in small villages, regional centres and university galleries. From comments in the visitor's books, it is clear that the exhibition provoked interest and controversy because of the views expressed in the children's art. Yes they have rights, as their work reveals in the selection that you can see on our website.[3]

From the children in this project we learned a great deal about a deep human yearning for a rightful life. In our discussions with these children, we listened, observed and responded as they expressed the desire for all children (not just themselves): to live lives free of war, to live in homes free of domestic violence; to live in a country without poverty; to have good teachers; to have a good education; and to live in good health. Clearly, these children had an idea of their rights and were able to express them. We were, in many ways, surprised to see how well children understood these ideas. But, we still wonder if they know how to protect their rights when faced with many of the biases and prejudices which children experience due to their age and maturity. Because of their vulnerability, those of us who work with and on behalf of children must keep vigilant and must be pro-active in educating both children and the wider community about the rights of children. The conversation we started in four Australian classrooms needs to be sustained on a regular basis in classrooms everywhere so children can develop human rights consciousness.

Five lessons from our project

There is no one way to begin the process of focusing on the rights of children. Each educational environment has its own special community needs and faces its own challenges. In our project, we learned some simple lessons about education for children's rights.

First lesson: start with the environment
Establish a philosophy and a setting that can be seen to be aware of and respectful of the rights of all who come through the door. Develop a programme where children can take an active role in making decisions, in caring for their environment and in working collaboratively with others. Infants will learn about their rights in an environment where care providers adapt routines to children's needs, honour their ideas and respond to their actions. Toddlers can take increasing control of their lives, so a rights-based environment should offer choices to children in decision-making, teach children to defend their rights, and protect children's right to play. In preschools, children enjoy learning about their rights by experiencing equal treatment, reading picture books, discussing ideas, exhibiting their

drawings and paintings, and thinking about the concept of fairness. In formal school environments, children should extend their participation in rights-based decision making through collaboration to develop class rules that honour each person's rights and responsibilities. In a rights-based environment, children will feel free to discuss their rights and challenge any unfair practices that may exist.

Second lesson: work with what your children know

Talk with children about their rights and listen to what they tell you. Children's ideas will not develop as the result of a single lesson, and adults should become aware that learning about rights takes time. Provide children with many options for exploring the concept of rights: drawing, writing, reading, listening to stories, dramatic play and, most importantly, in their daily interactions with others. As children's ideas evolve, record changes in children's understanding of complex questions of what is 'right', or 'fair', or 'just'. Help children to gain awareness of the world at large, and of the lives of children in diverse situations.

Third lesson: rights carry responsibilities

Every right is accompanied by a corresponding responsibility. This lesson is an essential aspect of learning about rights, and should form a framework for a respectful classroom environment. Teachers have many opportunities for teaching about the issue of rights and responsibilities. There is a dynamic link between rights and responsibilities – for every right, each recipient is responsible to handle that right with care. In the case of protection from physical punishment, it is important for children to learn that adults will protect them from harm; it is equally important for children to learn that, in return, you expect them to refrain from causing harm to others as a sign of respect and acknowledgement of their shared human rights and responsibilities. Such lessons are essential in human rights education.

Fourth lesson: everyone has rights; everyone is responsible

Human rights are for everyone. In the implementation of a rights curriculum, children can learn that the respect and dignity offered to them as individuals also belong to every person. Children can (and should) learn that everyone has the same rights, regardless of where they live or what they look like. In a classroom with rights-consciousness, children will see that they can play a role in safeguarding human rights by always speaking out when unfair practices occur. Both parents and teachers need to become informed about how to act as guardians to children's rights. When unfair practices are foisted upon children, it is the responsibility of every person to protect and safeguard human rights by taking positive action to assure children's dignity. For this reason, it is

How to talk to children about rights

- Must be an on-going part of the classroom conversation
- Conversations and activities should emerge from interests and issues relevant to the children
- Maintain respect for individuals and a sense of community responsibility
- Cultivate an attitude and climate of rights consciousness
- Avoid using outsiders for one off sessions; instead weave ideas into your regular programme
- Distinguish between needs, rights and desires; discriminate the difference between wishful ideas and real rights
- Use story books and picture cards as prompts to discussions
- Use rights vocabulary
- It is important to just sit and talk, at times, without any expectations of a particular outcome. If you want to change children's attitudes in one session you will feel stressed, and so will the children (Petman, 1984)

From *Helping young children understand their rights* by Joan Waters, OMEP, Australia

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important to listen carefully to children's stories about their daily lives and, when warranted, to act on their behalf.

Fifth Lesson: some people and policy makers may not like what you have to say, but you have an ethical responsibility and a human right to speak for children
In the long effort to reform the ways people treat children, there are bound to be areas of conflict arising from a clash between old and new thinking about children and their rights. It is inevitable that there will be differences of opinion about what constitutes children's rights within each classroom, each community and each country. Yet, it is important to remember that the rights of children are not nationalised – they are universal. So every child, everywhere, has rights.

In defending the place of rights in the lives of children, there will be disputes about the status and competence of children. Some will say that rights are for adults, but the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child indicates that rights are present from birth. In our project, children indicated that they already have rights, and that they did not intend to let them be usurped. So, where entrenched injustice to children occurs, each of us has a role to play in upgrading practices, policies and laws to better reflect the rights and dignity of children.

Challenges for the new generation

We recognise that this new generation of children growing up today will be the first in history to have their rights enshrined and protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. When they pass into adulthood, what personal lessons will they bring with them to our societies across the world? Will they bring with them the messages of a respectful environment for all, with rights and responsibility shared equally? Will they know that they can speak for their rights? Will they be able to protect themselves from violations of their rights? In communities all over the world, important work is being done to bring about the dream of a better world for every child. From Italy, Belgium, Cambodia, Australia and many more countries all over the world, there are examples of projects to educate children about their rights, ranging from new curricula to Children's Parliaments. While some projects may be undertaken at a large scale, many of the most important initiatives will be implemented at the grass roots level of local communities where people come together to live and learn. Projects should differ widely to suit the needs of local communities and the emphasis of local situations, yet all projects should have a similar emphasis on building enduring and rightful partnerships between children and society – starting in the early years when such initiatives really matter.

notes

1. The project team comprised: Barbara Piscitelli, Felicity McArdle and Raquel Redmond. This project was supported by the Queensland University of Technology Faculty of Education Community Service Grant Scheme, 1996-1997. For information on the projects which inspired us, see *Reggio Children, 1993 A Journey into the Rights of Children, Reggio Emilia: Reggio Children (see below)*.
2. Kermit the Frog is noted as the author of this poignant picture book for children to become exposed to the concept of human rights (see below).
3. *Children Have Rights:*
www.qut.edu.au/edu/sec/cases/childart/children.html

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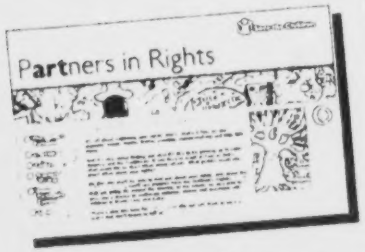
Selected resources

Partners in Rights



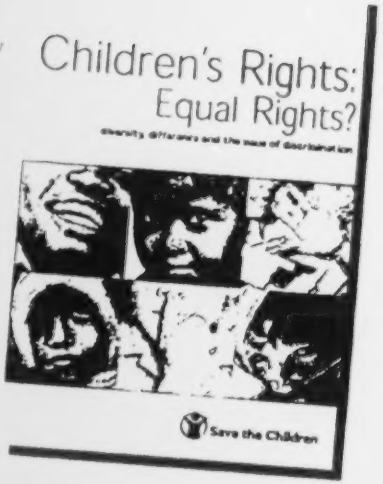
It's all about exploring your rights. And to make it fun, we use puppets, dance, music, drama, painting, model-making and lots, lots more. And it's also about finding out what it's like to be growing up in Latin America and the Caribbean. If you lived in Brazil or Peru or Cuba, what would life be like? What about school? What games would you play? What about your rights? On this site you'll be able to find out about your rights, and about the Partners project. You'll see pictures from the Children's Rights fiestas that are going on around the country. In the future, we also plan to give you a chance to exchange pictures, stories and questions with children in Brazil, Peru and Cuba.There's also lots here for teachers, so why not ask them to take a look? And don't forget to tell us what you think!
www.savethechildren.org.uk/partners

Children, Law and Justice
Savitri Goonesekere

Children, Law and Justice provides a detailed examination of the CRC, outlining the options available for using the Convention to create a legal environment favourable to the rights of the child in South East Asia. Professor Goonesekere comprehensively discusses the concept of child rights as expressed in the CRC, and the problems and prospects of realising these radical international standards in the current realities of the region.

Children, Law and Justice **(ISBN 81-7036-625-9) is published by Sage Publications India Pvt Ltd, M-32 Greater Kailish Market Part-I, New Delhi 110 048, India.**

Children's Rights: Equal Rights?



Marking the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the CRC, *Children's Rights: Reality or Rhetoric?* published by Save the Children in 1999, explored both the achievements and failings of the Convention and examined how far we have come in realising its vision. A principle finding was that children throughout the world continue to be victims of discrimination and do not enjoy equality of opportunity. A further year on *Children's Rights: Equal Rights?* reviews the achievements of the last year and then explores the issue of discrimination, examining its origins and how it impacts and affects children's lives. In 26 country reports, Members and Associate organisations of the International Save Alliance explore the issue of discrimination. Its reality in children's lives is revealed and set against the rhetoric of the Convention, identifying practical actions, which can be taken to combat discrimination and improve children's lives.

Children's Rights: Equal Rights? **is published by Save the Children Sweden Publishing, 107 88 Stockholm, Sweden. On-line bookshop: www.rb.se/bookshop**

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Poster competition 2001

Every year the Bernard van Leer Foundation invites readers of Early Childhood Matters *to take part in its annual poster competition and this year is no exception!*

The poster competition is actually more than a competition to produce a good poster to promote young children: it has become one of many activities that fall under our Visual Documentation Project. In this, the Foundations seeks to:

- encourage the use of film and photography as a valuable tool for communicating early childhood work;
- act as a tool among practitioners for sharing experiences, and so on; and
- assess skills and needs among partners in terms of visual documentation.

For the year 2001 Poster Competition we would like you to think about certain topics when sending in your entries. Here are some examples.

- **Telling a story:** a picture of a child listening to an adult telling a story or vice versa.
- **Play:** children or children and adults playing together.
- **Food:** children or children and adults preparing and/or eating food.
- **Help:** children/siblings helping each other or teaching each other things – for example, getting dressed, doing an activity, just holding hands.
- **Where I live:** pictures that portray your environment – house, village, city, countryside, and so on.
- **Intimacy:** a mother or father cuddling her/his child, a child sitting on its parents lap, and so on.

A good description of your entry is very valuable.

This year your entry can be either a photograph, a child's drawing, a collage or a storyboard of pictures/drawings. All must show aspects of early childhood development. As usual, the winning picture, drawing, collage or storyboard will become the Foundation's Poster for the year 2001 that will be distributed in more than 100 countries worldwide. Many of the other submitted entries will feature in the Foundation's other publications.

Guidelines

- Photographs must show young children engaged in some kind of activity, experience or interaction that illuminates early childhood.
- Photographs must be sharp and clear, with good contrast between the lightest areas and the darkest.
- Photographs can be in black and white or colour, prints or slides.
- Photographs, drawings or collages should measure at least 9 x 13 centimetres.
- Children's drawings should be made by a child within the age range of zero to seven.
- Please bear in mind that we must be able to make a useable print out of a drawing or collage.

Each should have the following details, if these are available and are appropriate for publication.

- The name of the photographer or of the child or children who made the drawing/collage.
- Some details about the child/children who made the drawing/collage (for example, their age, where they are from, where the picture was made – at home, in a centre or within a home visiting programme, and so on).
- Some details about the children and adults featured in the photographs and what they are doing.
- Some details about what the drawing/collage is about.
- The context of the photograph – for example, at home, in centre, within a home visiting programme, and so on.
- The location – country, region, town/village, and so on.

El Estado protejerá al niño contra toda forma de malos tratos o explotación por parte de sus padres o de cualquier otra persona gue lo tenga a su cargo (art. 19)

Venezuela: *Preschool Mural*
photo: Angela Ernst

- Any other useful or interesting information.

Please do not write on the backs of the entries: this may damage them.

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Because our publications are free, we are not able to make any payment for submitted materials.

Please send in your contribution to arrive by the end of September 2001. Those chosen will be mentioned in the January 2002 edition of *Espacio para la Infancia* and in the February 2002 edition of *Early Childhood Matters*.

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

Investing in the development of young children

The mission of the Bernard van Leer Foundation is to enhance opportunities for children 0-8 years, growing up in circumstances of social and economic disadvantage.
The objective is to develop children's innate potential to the greatest extent possible. We concentrate on children 0-8 years because research findings have demonstrated that interventions in the early years of childhood are most effective in yielding lasting benefits to children and society.

We accomplish our mission through two interconnected strategies:
- a grant-making programme in 40 countries aimed at developing contextually appropriate approaches to early childhood care and development; and
- the sharing of knowledge and know-how in the domain of early childhood development that primarily draws on the experiences generated by the projects that the Foundation supports, with the aim of informing and influencing policy and practice.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation was established in 1949. Its income is derived from the bequest of Bernard van Leer, a Dutch industrialist and philanthropist, who lived from 1883 to 1958. Bernard van Leer was the founder of the Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer.

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

Effectiveness Initiative: first fruits

Early Childhood Matters

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If you are interested in contributing to *Early Childhood Matters*, please contact the editor to discuss your ideas before you start writing. Contributions must be relevant to early childhood development and [illegible] with young children. Please note that the Foundation is unable to pay contributors because *Early Childhood Matters* is distributed free of charge. Please do not send unsolicited manuscripts for publication.

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photo: [illegible]
Inside front cover: [illegible]
photo: [illegible]

As well as *Early Childhood Matters*, the Foundation produces a wide range of publications about early childhood development. All are available, free of charge for small numbers of copies, to organisations or individuals interested in this field. A publications list is also available; please contact the Foundation at the addresses above and on the back cover.

UNFORTUNATELY TECHNICAL PROBLEMS RESULTED IN DR SHYAM SUNDAR DAS, THE AUTHOR OF 'IN DEFENCE OF THE CHILD IN INDIA' PUBLISHED IN *EARLY CHILDHOOD MATTERS 98*, BEING INCORRECTLY IDENTIFIED AS DR SHAM SUNDER ADS. MY SINCERE APOLOGIES TO DR DAS FOR OUR MISTAKE!

JIM SMALE, EDITOR

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The Effectiveness Initiative: first fruits

Last year, during my first visit to India, when I had the opportunity to visit Bangalore, I met the sculptor John Deveraj, and the group of street children with whom he creates theatre and artistic activities. To me, arriving tired and hot, Bangalore was a city full of dust, polluted with the exhaust of millions of ancient cars. During my stay, however, John and his family and the young people painted a picture of a city full of trees and beautiful buildings – a place in which I would love to live, they assured me. More important, they showed me that it was a city full of enterprising people with achievements behind them and the potential to achieve much more. And, as I learned more from them and learned to look through their eyes too, I was reminded that we see very little at first sight, perhaps because we only notice the obvious, or have preconceptions about what we will find, or are only there to look for what we want to see.

When visiting early childhood programmes, we see the poverty and material needs of the communities in which they are located. Sometimes we see children packed together in precarious childcare centres, or left to their own devices and wandering dangerous streets. This is what forces us to take action, to generate projects and programmes that aspire to change such situations. But it's only when we know the realitites properly that we can understand how to respond.

The EI is investigating how programmes have responded to realities. Each one of the programmes that is participating in the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) has a history of successes and failures, opportunities and difficulties. And every story from these programmes is a treasury of lessons about human nature, and about people's ability to perceive, reflect and understand, and then go on to fight adversity. Within such programmes – programmes that are aimed at the social inclusion of young children – there are thousands of experiences about taking advantage of opportunities and coping with obstacles.

It is these experiences that the EI looks for, describes and analyses in ten projects across the world. Teams of investigators, both specialists within international agencies and people from early childhood development (ECD) programmes, are exploring how the needs of children and their families are met in different contexts. And they are doing that by going beyond the obvious, by putting aside their preconceptions, and by looking at everything that is there rather than selecting and filtering. Overall, each of us in the EI wants to know what lessons we can draw from what these programmes do and how they do it. We want to open and maintain an international dialogue on best practices that takes account of the points of view of a variety of audiences. And we also want to explore methodologies that ensure the participation of the variety of people and institutions that are related to, or affected by, the programmes.

The EI is an investigation that is open and flexible. Many different approaches have been and are being taken; and we have changed the course of the investigation many times, learning as we go. Now, after almost two years of research, exchanges and comparisons, just when we thought we were reaching the end of the road, we have discovered that we have only just begun: as we build new knowledge and understandings, new question arise.

This edition of *Early Childhood Matters* shows the evolution of this process with examples of how distinct understandings have been generated. First, on page 6, Ellen M Ilfeld, in collaboration with the Analytical Group of the EI, reminds us of the initial motivation for the EI. Using a fable, she shows what participants in the EI first came together to look at. She also shows how the process of the EI is discovering a series of factors that could influence projects and programmes; and then offers a commentary on some of these.

The articles that follow show some of the variety of EI tools and strategies that have been used for listening to different voices and for extracting information about each of the projects or programmes. These include: the use of the river analogy that enables participants to construct a visual history of projects in Peru and Colombia; the

India: SEWA Crèche for 0-3 year olds in Kunjrav village
photo: Jean-Luc Ray / Aga Khan Foundation ©

machamba (farm land) analogy from Mozambique (page 14) that helps people to analyse the evolution of the escolinhas (community-based ECD sites); the seasonal calendars from the Philippines; meetings and debates from Portugal; different forms of open and unstructured interviews, and the analysis of anecdotes and stories in almost all the teams.

The article by Liliana Godoy (page 16) offers a detailed reconstruction of the steps taken in the process of exploring the programme of the Madres Guías (Guiding Mothers) in Honduras. The design of instruments to collect information, the identification of a working hypothesis, and the investigation that will guide the next steps, play central roles in this.

Participation in the EI project has created space for reflection within organisations and the communities that the projects and programmes serve. Feny de los Angeles-Bautista's description of the use of EI in the Philippines illustrates how a programme can benefit from this space for reflection, using concrete tools that help the community to organise for the benefit of its children (page 22). For his part, Rui d'Espiney (page 32) discusses how the EI process has been used in Portugal to examine what a project has achieved; thus opening it up to a new phase. In addition, an analysis of the project has revived awareness about issues related to children's social exclusion. More important, it has remotivated the project by reminding it of how and why it came into being.

The EI research process has itself impacted directly on the effectiveness of some of the participating projects and programmes. Each has generated information that is relevant for its own practices and has applied this immediately. For example, SEWA (page 36) has used EI and its proceesses, to bring about improvements in its approaches and operations. Fiorella Lanata's article about the PRONOEI project in Peru (page 38) and Fernando Peñaranda's article about the PROMESA project in Colombia (page 42) show how findings that have emerged from analysing data gathered through open interviews could improve aspects of the current operations of the project. However, in neither case was it enough to merely allow the original analysis and subsequent findings to be applied: first

they were returned to all the people who had provided the data to be considered, challenged, modified and refined in open meetings. Only then were they applied. This process not only demonstrates the extent to which each project was the property and responsibility of all stakeholders, it also demonstrates the degree to which the EI was internalised in those projects.

Fernando Peñaranda's article stresses the importance of a factor that has consistently emerged from all who contributed to the investigation: credibility. Few people involved in development work will be surprised that credibility should emerge as important: the real interest is in how it can be generated and sustained. In that sense, the value of the EI work is clear: it has revealed a wide range of examples of how credibility is naturally established, what militates against it, how it can be reinforced, and how and why it generates success.

Because of its nature, its approaches, it methodologies and its tools, the EI process has raised questions about the role of researchers in programmes. Peter Mwaura (page 47) as the official evaluator of the Madrasa Resource Centres programme in Kenya, discusses the relationship between a research team and a programme, looking especially at the advantages and disadvantages of being an 'outsider' or an 'insider'. He examines in detail what this means in terms of being able to generate knowledge about the project.

Today, after two years, we are beginning to compare findings across the ten participating projects and programmes. This is revealing thematic affinities – but also that these have a great diversity of local expressions. The people involved in the EI – an international network of consultants and practitioners – have been discovering and documenting the lessons hiding in each project or programme. To bring these findings together, a working group consisting of members of different teams, has started to identify and organise the emerging findings from all the different sites. Early in 2001 two meetings were held of those interested in beginning a cross-site analysis of these findings. Some of the results that emerged from these meetings are outlined in the article by Ellen M Ilfeld (page 53). She illustrates one method for categorising results using software (Atlas-ti) designed specifically for the analysis of qualitative research. She shows how it is possible to organise data flexibly, allowing concepts to be brought together into many different permutations of related groups of themes (families). She also shows how links can be maintained with the original qualitative data, allowing it to be retrieved and used to tell the real stories that lie behind the code words.

Overall, the research processes at the ten participating projects and programmes continue, generating findings and lessons that will be of use to donors and programme administrators. As they do, we are continuing to learn about learning, about those research processes and about the findings they are producing. Lessons are emerging and are feeding back into the projects that produced them. One major realisation is that one way in which effectiveness can be achieved is by simply creating room for reflection and research within projects. A second realisation is that our original purpose of looking for what makes programmes effective has been complemented: we now see that the Effectiveness Initiative is a rich process in and of itself.

Those of us engaged in the EI are still busily looking and reflecting together. That means that still more lessons will emerge when we complete our work in identifying everything we can about what makes projects effective; when we are further advanced with organising what we are learning; when we make many more comparisons across the participating projects to highlight similarities and contrasts; and when we develop more ways of understanding the significance of complex combinations of factors in a particular situation at a particular time. ○

Leonardo Yánez
Coordinator Effectiveness Initiative

The February edition of Early Childhood Matters will deal with the theme of early childhood and HIV/AIDS. I am especially interested in articles that centre on successful practice with young children and their nearest circles of adult supporters. If you have stories to tell, please do contact me so we can work together to share your experiences with others.

Jim Smale, Editor

Emerging maps of effectiveness

Ellen M Ilfeld
in consultation with Tom Lent, Leonardo Yánez, Arelys Yánez, and Judith L Evans

To examine in some depth what makes early childhood programmes work, the Bernard van Leer Foundation launched the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in January 1999, in partnership with participants in the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development. The question that is being explored within the EI is 'What makes early childhood programmes effective, in a variety of contexts, for diverse participants and stakeholders ranging from children, through parents and community members, to policy makers?'

This article discusses how the processes of the EI are revealing factors that can be significant in influencing project effectiveness; and it lists and discusses a number of these factors.

The motivation for the EI came from the fact that, as increasing numbers of donors are providing funding for early childhood programmes, they are turning to the Foundation for advice about how to invest their money effectively – that is, where to place it so that it would best support young children's growth and development. This is logical: the Foundation has been involved in funding programmes for young children and their families for over 25 years. However, when these donors asked, 'What makes a programme effective?' we found that we could not readily supply an answer.

The evolution of the EI

Beneath this rather imposing mega-question about programme effectiveness, there is another set of questions at the core of what we in the early childhood development (ECD) community do. These include:

> What is our work in ECD teaching us? How can we get better at what we do – for the sake of children, and for the sake of personal and organisational accountability?

As the EI was being created we talked with key people in programmes that many considered effective. Ultimately ten projects joined us in this exploration, all of which have at least a ten-year track record. They represent geographic diversity and are illustrative of a variety of approaches.

In addition to being grounded in the in-depth study of ten specific programmes, the EI is designed to be a cross-site, cross-agency collaboration and exchange that stimulates ongoing dialogue about effective programming. Furthermore, it is designed to test the application of qualitative research methods, well tested in other development arenas, to the field of ECD. The goals of this effort are two-fold: to gain deeper insights into what makes ECD programmes effective, and to activate international dialogue on effectiveness, that takes us… 'beyond our present scant measures and indicators of programme success.' (Evans and Salole, 1999*). As a result of the work with these ten projects we hope to be able to develop methods and maps for examining other programmes in the future.

To accompany each site in its application of the EI process, teams

were created consisting of four people per site. The teams were formed of 'insiders' (people related to the project) and 'outsiders' to design, explore, engage stakeholders, plan, implement, coordinate and communicate the process and findings. A Coordination Team was recruited by the Bernard van Leer Foundation to act as the centre of this spider web of exploration, action research, advocacy, communication and dissemination of learning and practice.

Each team began with its own core questions, derived from its reasons for participation in the EI; some used a common Analytical Framework. All teams used and developed participatory methods and tools along the way. Each team engaged the host organisation in the process (to varying degrees). In addition, each team had its own internal dynamic of operating together. Today, teams are at varying points in the process that includes: the setting up of a framework (a plan and way of working together); the gathering of data through the use of qualitative and participatory methods and tools; the analysis of an overwhelming multitude of data; a reflection on findings and insights with the people with whom the data were gathered; a plan to disseminate and communicate their process and content inside and outside the project; and a plan for advocacy.

As we proceed, we are realising that the journey – and what it is teaching us – is at least as interesting as the destination: answering the original question, 'what is effective?'

At this point we are beginning to think that effectiveness is as elusive as the elephant in the Indian story told by American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) who based the following poem on a fable that was told in India many years ago.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
'God bless me! but t the Elephant
Is very like a wall!'

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, 'Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!'

The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a snake!'

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
'What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,' quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!'

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: 'Even the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
'I see,' quoth he, 'the Elephant
Is very like a rope!'

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

The moral of the story:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

This Hindu tale about the six blind men exploring an elephant is often cited to illustrate the idea that we tend to believe that our perceptions about a part of something holds true for the whole thing: when we experience the trunk, or the tail, or the side of the elephant, we conclude that we now know the nature of the whole. In the traditional tale, the

Programmes included in the Effectiveness Initiative

Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC) Kenya
The Madrasa Project was created to provide a preschool experience for young children (ages three to six years) to help prepare them for school and provide basic Koranic teaching. The programme has been expanded to Zanzibar and Uganda. The MRC, based in Mombasa, Kenya, provides training and support to the country offices.

Associação da Criança Família e Desenvolvimento (CFD) Mozambique
Since 1995, the CFD (the Association for the Child, Family and Development) has focused on a variety of community-based activities, which include enabling 500 community network groups to systematise spontaneous ECD activities.

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) India
Since 1972 SEWA has been committed to the empowerment of women, and the creation of autonomous unions for women who work in the informal sector. Since 1989 SEWA has been organising and operating crèches (for children from birth to three years of age) for women working in the tobacco industry in the rural Kheda district and, more recently, in urban settings.

Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child (ALMAYA) Israel
ALMAYA originated in 1985 as the Community and Educational Project for Beta-Israel, an ancient Jewish community in Ethiopia, which immigrated to Israel. The project trains workers from the Ethiopian community, develops educational materials to enhance the community's Ethiopian heritage, and educates others about the Beta-Israel community's Ethiopian origins and current life in Israel.

Community-based Family Education (Mt Pinatubo) Philippines
This programme was initiated with communities affected by the eruption of Mt Pinatubo. Based on an assessment of local culture, programmes were developed with the community and include early childhood activities, parent education, and micro-enterprise projects. Income from the latter is shared equally by families, the cooperative and the programme.

Proyecto de Mejoramiento Educativo, de Salud y del Ambiente (PROMESA) Colombia
This integrated community-based early childhood programme was designed initially as an alternative participatory approach to ECD that could serve as a basis for a model of integrated social development and as a research and development project. Having begun in 1978 with 100 families in four small farming and fishing villages on the pacific coast of Colombia, the programme now serves approximately 7,000 families along the coast and in the interior, and variations of the approach are being implemented elsewhere in Colombia and in other countries.

Programa No-formal de Educación Inicial (PRONOEI) Peru
This began as a nutrition programme in the 1970s, and evolved into a community-based preschool. Later it became a model for non-formal preschool and was adopted by the Ministry of Education for national dissemination.

Samenspel (Playing together/Joint action) Netherlands
Samenspel was established in 1989 as a small-scale project to test strategies for reaching immigrant families (primarily from Morocco and Turkey) and to explore ways to encourage mothers with young children to participate in play afternoons. Training programmes for teams of multi-ethnic play leaders gradually developed. Samenspel groups can be found at playgroup and community centres and within self-help organisations and immigrant organisations.

Águeda Movement – Bela Vista Portugal
The Águeda Movement began with the creation of the Bela Vista preschool, and is a conscious effort to provide for children who are socially marginalised. Outreach efforts to raise awareness led to more inclusive community-based actions, and activities to reduce duplication among Portugal's various social services, and increase access for children and families that are not being served.

Madres Guías (Guide Mothers) Honduras
This home and centre-based preschool programme is designed to help children make the transition easily from home to preschool and then to primary school. Madres Guías are local women trained to work with families in their homes and with the children as they enter preschool. There is also a radio programme associated with the effort that focuses on providing child development messages to the wider public.

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men argue over who is right – and in some versions even come to blows over it. The moral is that we often argue out of ignorance, and believe our version of the truth to be the whole truth.

However, it is time for a modern re-telling of the tale. In this version, the men stop arguing once they realise that they have all had very different, but valid, experiences of the elephant. They devise a plan for trying to create a composite of their experiences and, at the same time, they call upon other villagers (perhaps those with the gift of sight) to add their perceptions of the elephant to the discussion. They call upon the elephant handlers, trainers, breeders, and scientists to all come and give their input. Then, despite their inability to see a whole elephant, they are able to arrive at a pretty good composite understanding of the elephant, complete with insights into its habits, behaviours, and what it is like to live and work with the elephant. They are now also able to understand how their intimate encounters with the elephant fit within and contribute to the larger understandings of the beast.

Two and a half years into the Effectiveness Initiative we are seeing the teams of insider-outsider researchers deriving extensive data, and their findings, insights and lessons are flying fast and furious. Reading many of the other articles in this edition will give a sense of what has been achieved so far. Our current challenge as facilitators of this far-reaching activity is to help participants in each of the programmes that are involved in the EI to engage in a collective construction of their understanding of the 'elephant'. To facilitate this collaboration between the 10 programmes, we have needed to develop tools for recording, sorting and representing the diverse learning that is happening, to characterise not only findings but also process.

To create what will be an ongoing dialogue, the Foundation's Coordinating Team has sponsored two week-long workshops to bring various sub-groups of the EI investigative teams together for intensive sharing of findings and collaboration. At each meeting, our understanding of what this matrix of activities can do for us (as participants, and as researchers into effective ECD) has deepened. Each workshop has taken us deeper into the specific details and understandings emerging from each site, and because of that, our collective understanding is increasingly derived from, and based on, the data.

Using the notes from the meetings, summary reports written about the meetings, and the programme-specific reports circulated, a team challenged with the task of organising the cross-site analysis met to pull together the collective insights shared within the two meetings into a composite discussion. This gives us a larger, shared map of what makes programmes effective in various contexts. A similar composite of insights has also begun to emerge, showing how the EI process has served to build capacity for greater understanding within programmes and in some cases has spurred more effective action.

One software tool that can be used in this work is Atlas-ti, an application that allows the user to identify key themes within the text, identify quotations in which these themes appear, link the themes into families, and map them graphically. The software allows the coding of data by staying true to the language and context of the original, and then the pulling out of both the themes and accompanying quotations within any number of groupings.

Insights into the EI process

The following themes emerged from the first two workshops that attempted to make cross-site comparisons.

Informal spaces for reflection.
The team from Portugal used this phrase to highlight the importance of creating time and opportunities for people involved in a project to engage in self-evaluation and self-criticism, and to deepen their understanding of what they are doing. The simple fact of having 'extra' funds earmarked for reflection, not tied to service delivery and child-family outcomes, allows projects time to take stock of what they are doing and how this relates to the goals of the programme and the realities of the diverse stakeholders in the process. There was broad agreement, based on data from various sites, that to provide 'space' – both literally in terms of places where people can meet informally, and figuratively, in terms of time, permission, and funding – is a crucial element in

Honduras: *the 'Fishing' tool in operation*
photo: Luis Méndez, CCF Honduras

allowing the people at all levels of the project (from beneficiaries to staff to community members and visitors) to assimilate what the project has to offer, and to contribute to it.

A shared value across the sites is starting with what people know and perceive. This is not surprising, since it was a value embedded within the conception of the EI and probably served as a selective factor in negotiating with projects that wished to participate in the EI. Several sites addressed the question of how to engage in open-ended investigations that would allow them to investigate diverse perspectives and experiences. At the Israeli project, for example, interviewers used one major question: 'tell us about Almaya…' This allowed them to hear how various interviewees thought about the programme, and to derive the issues and concerns from the participants themselves.

The tools for gathering information in most sites focus on pulling together a composite portrait of the programme. As one participant pointed out, a portrait is more than just a likeness showing the lines of the face – when done well, it captures the essence of the person being drawn. Different portraits of the same person, or in this case of the same programme, will provide very different interpretations and details. To create these portraits, sites used a variety of tools, including project timelines, participatory learning type maps and charts, interviews, photos and visual documentation, and so on. (these methods are being gathered and detailed in an EI toolkit).

Better lenses and honesty

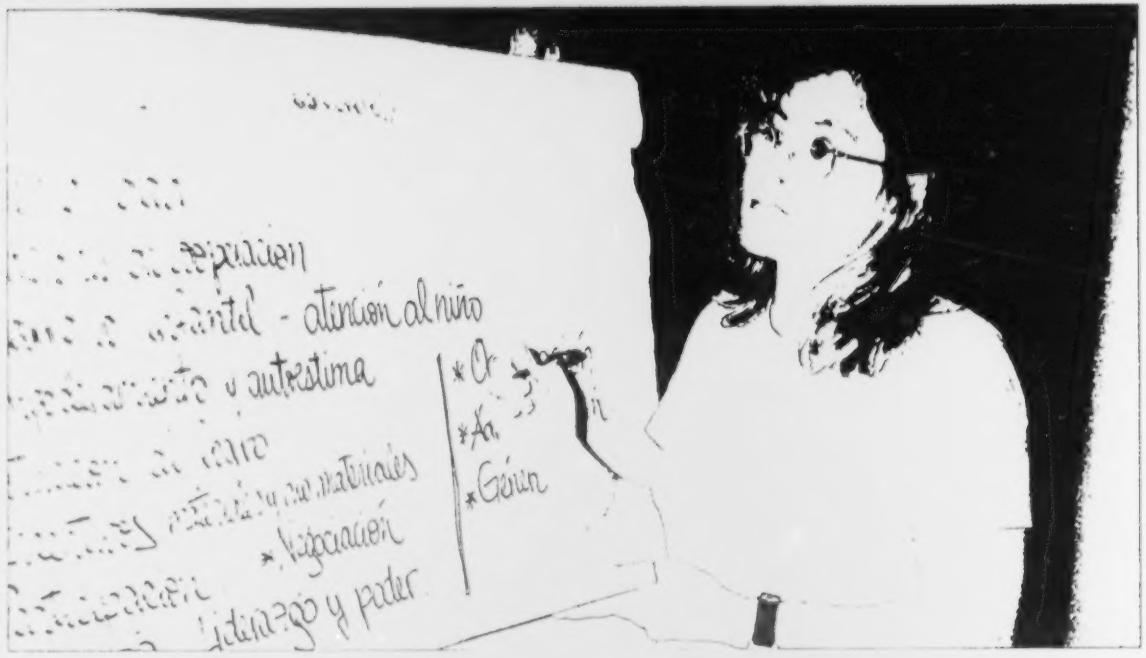
The EI process is challenging participants to take their investigation deeper, and to find better lenses for viewing their work. Some of the teams began their investigations with plans to interview diverse stakeholders on their opinions of effectiveness. They have been challenged by the EI collective discussions to look at whether such interviews can provide a full perspective. Asking informants why a programme was effective (with no real certainty that it *was* effective for the person being asked) does not get to an understanding of how the programme worked, what worked, when, under which circumstances and constraints, and with what kinds of outcomes.

In each site EI participants have wrestled with the balance between honesty and political sensitivity. If a programme went off track because a donor demanded certain practices, how can the insiders on the team risk telling that story honestly? We have seen that all of the programmes deal with socially marginalised populations, and that, in fact, political considerations affected many of the decisions, actions, and sometimes failures. Yet in ongoing programmes, naming and identifying these barriers can be threatening to the continuation of the programme or the cooperation of necessary agencies. One 'finding' we have agreed upon is that it takes courage to engage in this type of evaluation, and that we need to devise ways to articulate the challenges, mistakes, and problems that do not endanger that programme.

Several of the team members have noticed that there are clear filters on the stories being told and information being reconstructed. Some filters are important to respect and maintain, such as protecting the privacy of individuals, and the confidentiality that is part of any social service activity. But other filters related to the power of leaders

who wanted to control the image of a programme, or donors who wished to impose certain goals or meaning on the programmes' activities, or staff who just revised history to fit their own purposes. The use of a combination of insiders and outsiders helped the teams to recognise filters with greater clarity and devise creative ways of working with them. Two common kinds of filters appeared to be the rose-coloured glasses (this programme was wonderful, perfect, problem free), and the use of sacred cow concepts, such as 'participation' or 'it started with the people' to describe situations that in fact were not really participatory or in fact started only with two people who were unusual within the community.

One of the benefits of sharing data across the sites is that it helps us gain clarity on what we see and what we miss. The process of presenting findings in terms of the data has turned out to be important. Several of the progress reports contained observations and conclusions that gave rise to questions and discussions among the group, along with a recognition by the presenting team that they needed to now take their investigation or analysis deeper.



Colombia: *AWG meeting in Cartagena*
photo: Teresa Moreno, Bernard van Leer Foundation

There was general agreement among the teams that problems and mistakes can be points where a lot of learning can take place. However, the willingness to admit to, examine and learn from mistakes or problems appears to relate to the role of individuals in power positions within the programme. If a programme director or donor or board does not appreciate the learning that can come from mistakes, then it is too dangerous for staff members or the leadership to acknowledge problems.

One challenge of the EI process is to find ways to remove the value judgement about problems, so that we can gain deeper insight into when and how difficulties actually spur participants' to solve problems, and when they instead damage morale or block programme functioning.

The discussions of problems and mistakes that worked led to the reminder that the EI is not about identifying best practices, but rather about gaining understanding about how any practice must be suited to the context, and done in ways that allow it to be effective. We are seeing repeatedly that what appears to have been significant in a history is not so much the creative format or design of a programme, but the people at the centre of that programme and *how* they do what they do. Mistakes are sometimes made by good people trying their best, in circumstances where one's best is not really supported adequately.

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This relates directly to the question of honesty – programme providers and communities are working in rough and daunting circumstances, and there was evidence throughout the sites that donors and political leaders had made choices and decisions about those programmes without clear understanding – and honest recognition – of the situations.

One's own language.
The following is taken from the Progress Report from the Pinatubo Project in the Philippines:

> ... after the workshop held at the Hague in October, a decision was made by the Philippine team, that the team members and the Pinatubo staff would use Filipino in all written work related to EI activities.
>
> After two workshops with some parents and the EI team, and several consultations with the Pinatubo staff about the EI activities, the team leader noted how much more comfortable they were sharing details both verbally and in writing and how much more accurately the information was being documented when everything was in Filipino. The team leader felt that the data gathering and analysis that could be done would naturally be more precise, richer and in greater depth if they were encouraged to use Filipino. On the part of the two researchers (members) of the EI team assigned to work full-time on EI activities within the Pinatubo programme as well as the Pinatubo staff who were all involved in the activities, there was a feeling of being liberated from the anxiety of working in both Filipino and English. So the work of translating all the material – including documentation of workshops – would then be assumed mainly by the team leader and the Pinatubo Project Coordinator, also a member of the EI team.

The decision to use one's own language in conducting the research (chosen by many but not all of the teams), rather than using the language of the project funder has turned out to be significant in allowing teams to get at issues that are important to the programme participants and staff. In some cases, such as the Philippine example cited, this decision freed the EI team to work more effectively, although they must still work not only in Filipino and English, but also with the languages of the programme participants, the Aeta.

The concept of using one's own language was broadened through the cross-site discussions to a commitment to trying to stay true to the language of the experiences we are investigating. That means using the names that come from the data to assign 'theme codes' within Atlas-ti, and writing down the words people use when taking notes in meetings, rather than summarising what was said, or reducing it to jargon. If someone talked about the programme carrying on, we made a conscious effort not to translate that into 'sustainability'. Because of that, the maps of themes that are emerging contain many synonyms, each giving another shade of meaning to the ideas being expressed.

In addition, a conscious effort evolved to unpack concepts – to try to define the terms and the language in talking about the specific data, circumstances, or context which gave rise to them. We have seen that our goal of understanding what goes on in a programme is related to our ability to stay true to the experience, words, and details, and then to distil the meaning from those, rather than paraphrasing early in the process, and then finding ourselves stuck in the same, often over-generalised, vocabulary that characterises much of the discourse in ECD circles.

Living documentation.
Within the EI we have experimented with various methods of recording conversations, so that the resulting notes could both capture and facilitate better discussion. Among these is the use of 'web' creation, where a concept or term is discussed and expanded upon, and notes are kept in a spider-web style chain of associations connected to that. To deepen this style of note taking, additional lists of 'related questions', 'comments and observations', and other relevant data are kept, so that participants can help to sort, categorise and relate their thoughts to what other people have said, and so that the discussion can be reconstituted later in narrative form.

The Israeli team contributed a description of the Talmudic format (discussed in an earlier edition of *Early Childhood Matters*®) that allows for a central text to be presented together

with commentary and linkages to other scripture. Based on that model, we are experimenting with writing up the cross-site analysis into a form we are calling a 'living document', which will include a graphic image of the map of relevant themes, a brief definition or summary of the topic, a narrative text discussing the theme together with quotations and examples derived from the data, a section with questions that arise from this discussion, a section discussing implications for funders, a section for bibliographic links to relative research literature, and a column running down the right side of each section where readers can write comments, pose questions, challenge assertions, and contribute relevant data or findings from their programme.

The living documents will be written based on collective maps of themes, derived from the data. An initial mapping of data has yielded an emerging picture of a very large topic that was identified at the Cartagena cross-site meeting: 'acompañiento' (see page 53). This map, created out of the documentation from previous cross-site meetings, was presented to participants in the cross-site dialogue so that it could be challenged, revised, and serve as a model for a variety of collective mapping exercises. From this work, an agreed upon map of themes will be used as the basis for writing up initial living documents, and for voluntary contributions of data from each site to 'fill in' the map with specifics from their work. This will allow each team to determine which of their data can be safely shared in the larger arena, and which needs to be kept confidential, 'translated' into more anonymous forms, or focussed for in-site or local audiences. We are also hoping that this process will spur teams to examine their data more deeply with some shared lenses, to give us greater insight into issues of common concern.

Taking back, giving back.
The example of challenging the maps with the participants, given above, reflects a process which teams have used within their own investigations. It has emerged as an important part of the EI process – taking back what we find to the people who generated the information, both to make sure we have understood what the contributors of the information meant, and to deepen that understanding by stimulating further dialogue. In addition, taking information back creates a springboard for giving back to participants, not only by providing information on the other parts of the elephant, but also by creating the space for group and individual reflection.

Part of giving back is making sure that a good proportion of the research effort is focussed on topics of concern to the programme staff and participants, not just to the funders or ECD field at large.

Within the work of individual teams at the programme sites, and within the cross-site workshops, we have tried to find active and participatory ways of taking back, sharing, and deepening the information (getting beyond dry presentation and lectures).

EI as capacity building, activating processes.
Three of the teams (Philippines, India, Portugal) chose to see the EI primarily as a capacity-building activity, rather than as research. They integrated EI activities into their ongoing programme operation, seeing the Initiative as an opportunity for deepening reflection and self-evaluation among programme stakeholders. As we learn more about how these tools can help programmes evolve, and how others have used their EI tools for activating effective reflection and capacity-building, we are learning how to use EI tools and insights to stimulate new and more effective ways of working to support young children, their families and communities.

What next?

In discussing how the processes of the EI are revealing factors that can be significant in influencing project effectiveness, and listing and discussing a number of these factors, this article leads on to the question 'How can all this mass of qualitative data be organised and worked with so that lessons can be drawn to guide future work in the ECD field? One approach to this complex task is discussed in the article that begins on page 53.

* See *Early Childhood Matters* 93, October 1999.

The Effectiveness Initiative in Mozambique

Laura Pujol

The Effectiveness Initiative (EI) in Mozambique aims to reinforce community-based early childhood development (ECD) programmes in Mozambique through the results of an in-depth and process-oriented exploration. This exploration is centred on four community-based ECD initiatives. Its emphasis is on the views of the community members and – especially – those of the children. In working with community members, the most significant topics are how they manage and sustain escolinhas (community ECD sites); what makes the communities so resilient; and how outside organisations can effectively support communities in providing quality ECD programmes. In working with the children, the main focus is on the importance to them of their escolinhas.

The Mozambique EI team have brought together staff from the Associação da Criança, Família e Desenvolvimento and Wona Sanana (To see children) to work with the four communities, helping them to gather information, analyse it and draw conclusions on what works and what doesn't in their community-based ECD initiatives, and on how they see these developing over time. The selected sites are Hulene, a peri-urban area in the outskirts of Maputo (the site of the main case study); and Masivila in Gaza, Itokhula in Nampula, and Palmera in Maputo (in each of which there will be a case study focussed on a theme that characterises that site).

The team has reviewed and adapted the EI Analytical Framework by discussing what it means for them and localising the concepts on which it is based. As a result, they have come up with a tool that allows them to introduce themes at field level and to start gathering data. It is called the machamba – farm or garden in the Shangani language – and it works by using the machamba as an analogy for an escolinha.

Using the machamba analogy

The machamba analogy enables the exploration of all the concepts from the Analytical Framework that are relevant for the machambas, plus some new ones. It replaces the logic of the Analytical Framework with the logic of the machamba, a logic that makes sense to the community and its context. When people discuss the escolinhas, they do so in terms of what makes the machamba work, then come up with their equivalents in the escolinhas. The process progresses through four levels.

First, the set of elements that are needed to make a machamba work are identified. This is the level of 'What we have'. This means more than just what is the soil like, what tools and experience do we have, how would it support a particular crop. It extends to such factors as what happens without human intervention, and what is growing there already .

The second level is 'What this represents' – here the machamba relates to the escolinha: for example, perhaps the fertiliser represents the animadora; the growing seed the child.

The third level goes deeper, drawing out 'What this signifies' – this may signify the value of the animadora: her attitudes, skills, experience and so on.

Finally, the fourth level is about 'What this makes possible' – the potential that is there for children to grow within their communities, for example.

The method is still being refined by the Mozambique EI team internally and through tests conducted in two of the four selected sites. But it is already clear that there is sufficient space and scope in the analogy of the machamba to incorporate different perspectives; and that it strengthens the community's ownership and vision of the escolinha as it is discussed and challenged.

There are different ways of using the analogy. Some people see children fit in the machamba as seeds, some as land and some as the harvest. They explain:

> *When you start the machamba, you don't start from scratch, you don't remove everything from the land because that is foolish.*

The children are seen in their context, interacting with what is already there for them. There are elements that feed into the process, and there may be secondary elements that are also fundamental to the strength of the whole process. For example, grass burning prepares the land:

> *If you don't get the land ready it turns into a negative element, yet if you get it ready it turns into an important strength.*

What is the equivalent element in an escolinha? It would be difficult to introduce this in an abstract way, but easy to establish a comparison between the preparation of the soil and the mobilisation of parents to take children to escolinhas.

The machamba, just as the escolinha, is not only seen as what it is and what it represents, it is also seen in terms of what it will produce: the quality of the crop or the qualities of the children who will one day be adults, playing a range of roles in their communities.

What are the results of the escolinha? What is being nurtured and grown in the escolinha that will be harvested and go back into the granary? Children who go to the escolinha benefit – for example, they become more clever and knowledgeable. When they take their place in their community as they grow and mature, they add new richness to what is there as they interact with parents and siblings, generating more knowledge among them. Discussions by community members take the analogy further, exploring the meaning of the child as an active participant in its environment.

The machamba is also a way to bring in traditional knowledge that already exists in the community, recognising its value and linking it to the escolinha. One example is that of discussing the control of pests in the machamba: people grow medicinal plants in their machambas, which are also used to treat children's illnesses.

The challenges faced by the team now are how to systematise the variety of elements identified through using the machamba analogy and the communities' reflections about how they have related these to children and the escolinhas. These are complex issues, yet the machamba is easier to work with than working directly with abstract concepts.

The use of the machamba analogy automatically ensures that the discussion is contextualised in a particular and specific way. The opinions of each person relate to the wider context that is established by everyone who contributes: everybody understands the relationship between what is being said and the escolinha. This has solved an important question for the team in relation to the EI: how to anchor the EI discussions in a permanent framework, in ways that make sense to the reality of the people they work with. The machamba analogy is highly effective in this respect. ○

This article draws on the Action Plan of the Mozambique EI Team *and personal communications with the members of the team.*

Mozambique: *children at an escolinha*
photo: Leonardo Yánez, Bernard van Leer Foundation

Honduras: the Madres Guías of La Huerta

Liliana Godoy R

The author joined the Christian Children's Fund Honduras (CCFH) Effectiveness Initiative (EI) team, in the study of the Madres Guías (Guide Mothers) project in the community of La Huerta, Honduras. She is one of the outsiders in the team, whose principle job is to help make visible important aspects of what is happening that insiders may not see and take into account because they are too close to the work. This article presents the author's views on some of the project's achievements.

'... and you, why do you want a boat, if I may ask?' asked the king ...
'To seek the unknown island' replied the man.
'What unknown island?' asked the king, hiding his smile as though confronted with a kind of madman with a mania for voyages – the type that, right from the very start, you know you should not thwart.
'The unknown island' repeated the man.
'But there are no unknown islands! They are all are on the maps.'
'Only the known islands are on the maps'
'And what unknown island are you speaking of?'
'If I could tell you that, it would not be unknown.'

The story of the unknown island
José Saramago

Honduras: child with Programme Educator
photo: Elaine Menotti, former Hart fellow with CCF Hondu

> *this has not excluded the use of an ad hoc analytical framework*

The EI process in Honduras and its phases

So how has it gone, this search for unknown elements, or success factors or possible keys to effectiveness that have perhaps been intuited, but that have been invisible or undocumented until now? It has been useful to have a general analytical framework for the Effectiveness Initiative (EI). But more useful is the fact that this has not excluded the use of an *ad hoc* analytical framework in Honduras. This has guided the search for local experiences – something that has made it possible to take account of local realities and specifics. One resource that has helped to orientate both the search and the interpretation of its findings has been the formulation of what we called the 'wild hypothesis', the conjectures and suspicions that the first analyses of some data awoke in us. It has functioned as a kind of pattern or first map to help us achieve a more rigorous confirmation of our findings.

Essentially, the investigative process has organised itself around establishing relationships between:

- the objectives of the study;
- the instruments used in the study;
- the findings;
- the formulation of hypotheses;
- the confirmation of gaps in information; and
- feedback for the next steps in the search.

In order to establish these relationships the following list of questions was developed to guide the process of gathering, recording, processing and analysing the information.

- Why are we investigating what we are investigating?
- What do we want to investigate?
- What are the instruments we should use, and how should we use them?
- How do we organise the data we obtain?
- How do we analyse these data?
- How do we return the results of our search to the sources so that they can be validated?
- How do we systematise the results of the validation?
- Which are the important findings to share with others and why?
- How and to whom should we disseminate these important findings?

We see these as links and we understand their relevance by chaining them together logically. This is because it is the connections between them, combined with constant feedback to each level of the project, that produce a continuous process that results in the generation and recording of lessons.

The tools that we used

In the study, we used a 'tool kit' for each of its different phases; and we involved different people in each phase as well. The following tables (page 18) make this clear.

Phase: mapping the information

Tool	Activity	Participants
The river	Charting the story of the project	- Project EI Team
Roses and thorns	Constructing a living image of the Madres Guías	- Madres Guías
The mural	Presenting images of the community	- Children
Fishing	Generating images of the Madres Guías	- Madres Guías
	The Madres Guías' concepts	- Madres Guías
	Listening to our children	- School children
	Listening to parents	- Parents
Looking at images	Children expressing their opinions	- Preschool children
Structured and semi-structured interviews	Interviews	- Active Madres Guías - Inactive Madres Guías - Former and present members of the Parents' Committee - Project personnel - External consultants
Card games	Exploring the importance of tasks	- Madres Guías
Survey	Seeking opinions	- Mothers
The album	Making a qualitative profile of the guiding mother	- Madres Guías

Phase: returning and validating the information

Tool	Participants
Group discussions aided by graphics about the results produced through the activities	- Madres Guías and mothers - School children - Parents

Phase: organisation and analysis of data

Tool	Objective
Transcribing	To recover the data
Matrix	To systematise the data and tools
Anthropological perspective	To obtain a new vision of the data
Categorising according to thematic areas	To enable a deeper analysis of the data
Glossary	To establish common meanings

The findings: in search of the lost island

The 'wild hypothesis' that I described earlier was a useful stage in helping us to understand what we were discovering. Also important was the development of common meanings between all of those involved, insiders or outsiders. But central to our investigation has been the formulation of two plans for analysing the data. The first of these is about the Madres Guías project itself, and the second covers the processes of the CCEH team, both in documenting this work and in its

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Plan for analysing data	Findings	Lessons learned
The Madres Guías project: identification of the keys to effectiveness	By areas (identified categories) By actors involved From qualitative and quantitative results of processes	
The EI research in the Madres Guías project: the process and its impact on the Madres Guías project and organisation	By phases By actors involved By method used By effects produced on the project, on the organisation, on the actors	

participation in the EI. The table above shows the basic structure of these two plans, relating their intent to the kinds of findings that were sought, and the ways in which they were sought.

Questionings, first findings and lessons

The remainder of this article deals with the themes/topics that have arisen in the EI work within the project so far. Much of the content comes from the discussions of the CCFH EI team, but some is from me alone. It is all about hypothesis, findings or questions. Everything is still open and will be modified in the future as our analyses become more profound.

Empowerment and self-esteem
The Madres Guías value the knowledge they have acquired, the roles they have developed, and the recognition they have received from the community over the years that the project has been operating. All of this strengthens their self-esteem as people, their sense of value in their families, and their sense of worth as contributors to positive changes in their community. In addition, the manuals they received from the project are perceived and used as 'the books of truth' and heighten both the status and the trust that the Madres Guías enjoy from the other mothers.

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The Madres Guías project has a system of prizes as a way of validating and recognising the Madres Guías' efforts. Such non-monetary incentives serve to reinforce the act of volunteering. In this sense, the project has become a space in which the talents of the community are being rediscovered and brought back into use.

The act of returning the information produced by the investigation to the Madres Guías has had a great impact on their motivation: it makes them feel more appreciated and valued. In addition, this act of returning becomes part of sharing the investigative experience. In fact, the Madres Guías are so interested in the information that some of them asked for copies of the folders containing the results of the techniques (fishing, for example) so they could keep them to study in their own homes.

Participation
The Madres Guías project establishes functions for each of the actors involved, and makes a point of clearly communicating the 'rules of the game'. This contributes to the community being better disposed towards the project and to a greater degree of participation by all members of the community. One example that supports this view is that the community elects the Madres Guías to serve as such, and also elects them to serve on the Parents' Committees. Hypothetically at least, we feel that these are affirmations of the effectiveness of the ways in which the project promotes cooperation.

Community monitoring
We have also been interested in community monitoring and models of management that are based on the interchanges of lessons learned between the community and organisations such as CCFH. To explore this, we asked questions such as, 'Is there any relation between the quality of service that the project supplies, and the role of community participation in monitoring early childhood care and development projects?'

Leadership/Culture of respect for hierarchies
The members of the CCFH team saw a tendency to respect hierarchies in the various actors in the community that is characteristic of the national culture. In the socio-linguistic context of the region, there is a leaning towards subordination that can be seen in terms such as 'teacher', 'president' and

Honduras. *Paola of the La Huerta community*
photo: Elaine Menotti, former Hart fellow with CCF Honduras

'director'. In substituting these by terms such as 'kindergarten worker' or 'coordinator of the Parents Committee', the project attempted to reduce the sense of hierarchy in favour of something more horizontal and therefore more appropriate to cooperation.

The project is introducing changes in some of the community's cultural patterns. For example, a more active participation by women. In this sense, the mediating role of CCFH is an important resource because it promotes participation generally, and also brings in the idea of negotiation as a real process for decision-making.

In the case of the Madres Guías, their skills give them status with the mothers because they increase their credibility. At the same time, the fact that they have the 'seal of approval' from CCFH, is something significant that strengthens general confidence in the implementation of the programme.

Leadership and power
A variety of reflections emerged about the types of leadership within the project, especially in the case of the Madres Guías and the Parents' Committee. In this sense, it seems that the community's idea of who has real power – and therefore real leadership – is linked to who has control of resources. At the same time, the leadership – and therefore the power – that the Madres Guías have in the community is different in nature: it comes from their control of information. Hypothetically, the project links two types of power (or leadership): economic power, via the Parents' Committee; and the power inherent in the control of information by the Madres Guías. However, although the project has had an influence by positively encouraging leadership, communities still link power with political parties; something that is, once again, a product of the socio-cultural characteristics of the region.

The profile of the Madres Guías
From the results we have obtained, we can see that the community respects the Madres Guías and recognises the worth of their work. The Madres Guías are seen as leaders, and have great power to mobilise the community. They also show more resilience than other women.

However, within the project we encountered young single women without children who were or had been Madres Guías. These were not accepted by the community, nor shown respect by the mothers. But the project has had to use them because there have not been enough mothers in the community willing to become Madres Guías.

We feel it is important to reflect more on this reality, or investigate it further. After all, many of these young women carry out the role of mothers for their smaller siblings. In addition, it is a feature of the project to ensure that all of the women who guide are properly trained to support mothers. One idea that remains a question is whether these young women could promote a new line of development in the project: that of reducing the incidence of pregnancy among young women, or of ensuring that they are better prepared to become mothers. It would also be useful to find out why there are insufficient mothers who are willing to become Madres Guías.

Training
Training is the crux of the project, the point at which all the other themes/topics that we have discussed interact with each other. A large quantity of printed materials supports the training and emphasises its importance to the project. These materials are updated periodically.

The Madres Guías use both technical and colloquial language appropriately. On the technical side, this could be the result of long and ongoing training in areas such as basic care of children.

In the case of Madres Guías who cannot read, or do so with difficulty, the drawings that are included in the training materials complement what they are able to read while their trainers reinforce what they learn with other materials.

Communication
The manuals that the Madres Guías use represent a resource through which the project communicates their functions and their competencies. They also contain programmed content for each of the thematic areas. However, it is important to recognise that the oral tradition predominates in the activities that the Madres Guías run with the mothers. In this respect, we could ask, 'What is the effect or influence of the oral tradition on the effectiveness of interventions, where the incidence of non-literacy or illiteracy is high?' and 'Given that the oral tradition is significant in transferring knowledge, does it influence the effectiveness or quality of the activities, and does it have any effect on the sustainability of the project?'

The symbolic
The 'symbolic' is about attributing strength and power to some activities and some figures who participate in the project. It is especially associated with the Madres Guías. For example, they are seen as models for the other mothers, for families and generally for other members of the community too. This is because of who each of them is and what they do in early childhood care and development. This is reinforced by ceremonies. For example, there is a ceremony at which each receives the manuals, bags and boxes of materials that legitimise their roles as Madres Guías, and another as the children enter the kindergarten and are received by the kindergarten workers. This latter ceremony reinforces a commitment between Madres Guías and kindergarten workers.

The significance of religious beliefs and practices also has to be considered. Do these impact positively on the dedication and commitment of the Madres Guías?

Constructing a story without end

These are the achievements of the project to date as they seem to me, an outsider. Now we have to return to the original data and analyse it afresh, fortified by the findings and lessons that we have learned from our analyses so far. And we should also think about extending the search for underlying effectiveness into communities other than La Huerta.

In terms of the EI, what is needed now is to share these findings and lessons. The objective is to identify differences and similarities as part of capitalising on our collective learning through the EI. In this way we shall discover new clues that will help us in our search for that unknown island.

Philippines: early childhood care and development at the heart of community development

Feny de los Angeles-Bautista

Ten years ago, Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines erupted and 10,200 Aeta families were displaced from their ancestral homes at the foot of this long-dormant volcano. In the aftermath, and in the midst of relief efforts, the Community of Learners Foundation (COLF), a non governmental organisation (NGO) in the Philippines, started its early childhood focused Pinatubo Family Education Programme in two of the resettlement areas where Aeta families were just beginning the challenging process of rebuilding their lives. The programme was supported by Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (DWHH), a German development agency that wanted to incorporate programmes for children within the massive rehabilitation relief efforts that it was funding, and that were being carried out by the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM).

> The eruption of Mt. Pinatubo on June 16, 1991 was a painful tragedy and a great challenge in our life. We left our farm and everything we owned. We did not want to leave our home because we do not want to live in the town. But the government forced us to leave and move to a place closer to the town. There was nothing we could do and after all, they were right. It's a good thing we listened to them or else we would have been buried in lava.
> *Devillena Family as told by Mercy, mother*

At the outset, the Pinatubo programme was designed to provide a support system for a total of 1,072 Aeta families from the two resettlement sites in an integrated, community-based way, with a special focus on the early childhood years. COLF's approach involved working directly with children[1] and their parents; and the programme focused on the provision of basic services – health, nutrition and education – for both.

For the first year, COLF provided a programme team composed of nurses, teachers and social workers from its base in urban Metro Manila. They served as community-based child development workers responsible also for community organising and development. They were trained intensively at the COLF School for Children and other COLF community-based programmes in poor urban and rural communities. Early on, local community members who had completed either secondary education or had a college degree in a related field, were recruited as volunteers/apprentices. This was in preparation for an eventual phase-out of Metro Manila-based staff in favour of a predominantly local staff. By the eighth year of the programme only two Metro Manila-based staff members remained: most of the other 24 are residents of the two communities.

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Initially, the programme consisted of two components.

1. A morning centre-based programme for four to six year olds with an experiential, play-based curriculum and supplementary feeding and health services.
2. An afternoon, home-based parent-child programme of playgroups and a Parent Education Programme (PEP). The latter consisted of workshops, discussion groups on family life issues, early childhood care and development (ECCD), livelihood, and a literacy programme. Supplementary feeding, growth monitoring, and health services were also provided for infants up to three years olds.

From the second year onwards, the following components were added or developed:

- Home and centre-based Child-to-Child programmes for children aged 7 to 15, to support their continued schooling and promote their active participation in family health and education programmes. In the home-based programme, they formed a group facilitated by a COLF child development worker, while younger children were attended to by parent volunteers.
- An expansion of PEP livelihood activities (coordinated by an agriculturist); and preparations for organising parent cooperatives. Both components involved all COLF community and child development workers.

To mobilise more support for the Pinatubo programme, the families and staff of the COLF School for Children also organised regular medical missions for each of the two programme sites. This both supplemented the health programme and built bridges between families in the school and families in the Pinatubo programme. For example, children in the school raised funds to buy learning materials and books they wanted to share with the Aeta children.

Over the past eight years, the programme has continued successfully, and there have been a number of significant developments. For example, PEP also serves as the context for community organising efforts, including agriculture-based and off-farm livelihood projects, a local people's organisation for each resettlement site has been registered, and cooperatives are being organised. These developments resulted from incorporating a focus on issues such as gender, politics and economics, while small-scale initiatives such as the above were being simultaneously launched. But they also owed much to COLF's efforts around parental cooperation in running the children's programmes, and the livelihood projects and cooperatives. Such complementary developments show COLF's holistic and integrated approach to supporting the development of young children and their primary caregivers.

Weaving the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) into the Pinatubo programme

A programme such as this was clearly of interest to the EI because of its approaches and because of its holistic nature. The EI in turn was interesting for COLF because:

- it provided a valuable and rare opportunity to undertake an in-depth study on the programme and its impact on the lives of the children and families, and the two communities;
- it was a very important means of further strengthening the programme as the DWHH[2] funding was coming to a close;
- it would help to consolidate whatever progress or gains had been made; and
- it would facilitate the all-important process of 'handing the stick' over to the parents who would ultimately be responsible for sustaining the programme and its benefits.

However, COLF was convinced that the EI had to be woven seamlessly into the life of the programme: this would help to ensure that the primary stakeholders – children, parents, and community-based and COLF staff – would be actively involved in the *action-documentation-reflection-action* processes that are central to the EI.

For its part, the EI looks for both qualitative and quantitative information and emphasises the need for an in-depth analysis of the relationships between both kinds of data in the quest for a definition and description of so-called 'effectiveness in ECCD programmes'. As such, EI is primarily a cooperative teaching-learning process.

Uniting the needs of the Pinatubo programme and those of the EI proved to be natural and easy. This was because of the centrality of participatory learning and action (PLA) to the programme as a whole and to the PEP in particular. In working with parents from the beginning of the programme, a PLA-guided 'action-reflection process' was applied both as a way of learning about the parents, their children and families, and the community, and also as an approach to problem-solving and action planning. From the beginning, parents and COLF child development workers developed and used interactive group processes like games, reflective-problem-solving activities, group discussions, and writing processes adapted from the 'whole language approach' applied by COLF in its educational programmes.

In addition, the parents themselves have always been involved in the organisation of their learning activities and the pace at which this learning takes place. More importantly, they have always taken steps – small or giant – to address their realities. For example: they developed their own learning materials through the creation of books and posters, and through the construction of maps, matrices, charts, calendars and diagrams that represent their life experiences as parents and community members; organised their knowledge; and promoted the detailed analysis of issues that affect them as caregivers of their families, as workers and as community members. Dialogue has always been central to all of these processes, and it was evident to us in COLF that – for the children, the parents and COLF staff members – the all-important stage that Paulo Freire has described as 'taking action in cooperative association with one another, both as facilitators and learners to free ourselves' could really flourish.

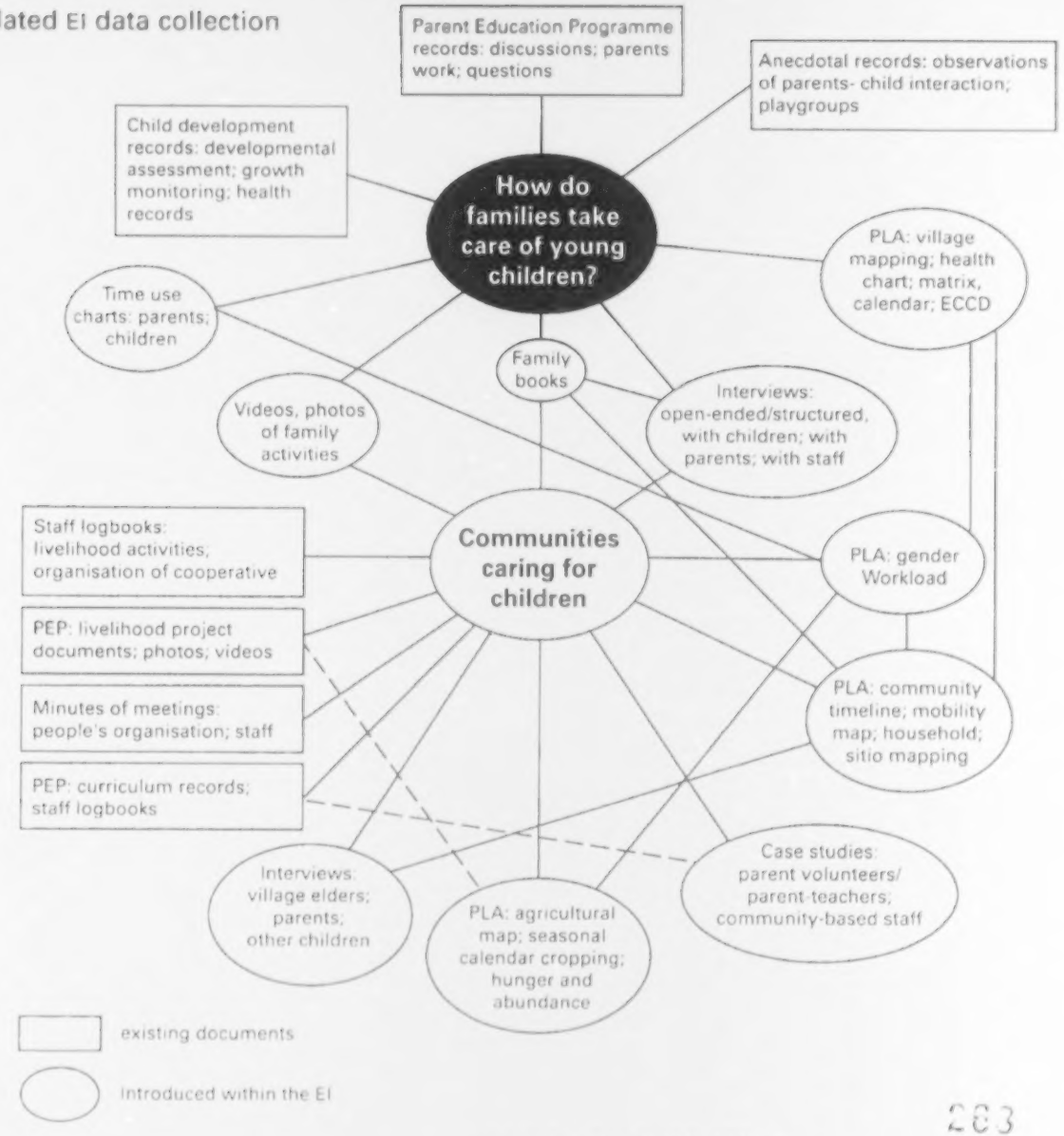
Given this setting, the initial stages of planning for the activities of the EI concentrated on choosing and adapting highly interactive methods and activities for the sets of processes (the 'EI tool kit') that would be used to learn with, from and about children, families and communities.

Two examples show how this worked in practice. Small group brainstormings with parents, older children and community-based staff were used during the development of the curriculum 'web' that lies at the heart of the Pinatubo Family Education Programme. Translated into, and adapted for the EI context, this involved the participation of both the primary stakeholders and the COLF EI team members. The point was to generate a set of themes that had proved significant during the life of the programme so far that could be used as starting points for 'mapping its contours'. Two major themes emerged: 'Families caring for children' and 'Communities caring for children'. In the same brainstorming session, words, phrases, and visual images were generated for each theme. A further round of brainstorming sessions and discussions concentrated on framing questions out of these. Taken together, this set of questions constitute one way of articulating 'What is it that we want to learn through this study?' from the diverse points of view of all stakeholders.

Collecting and organising data ... and learning from it

But to succeed, EI work must not only identify, develop and use the right tool kit it must also discover, organise and learn from all the relevant information or data. In the Pinatubo programme this was made easier by the quantity and quality of the documentation that had been undertaken from the beginning. Existing sources included narrative progress reports, financial reports, minutes of meetings, programme logbooks for various purposes, curriculum plans and staff journals for the parent education programme and the children's programme, and evaluation reports by independent evaluators which were commissioned by the DWHH. Using existing sources of information also involved collecting, organising and tabulating various children's records: the Developmental Assessment Checklists of specific groups of children and school records (those who participated in the programme from 1991-93 as 3 to 5 year olds and are now close to completing elementary school or are starting high school, and the children who are now 7 to 10 year olds and were up to three year olds when they participated in the programme from 1992-93); growth monitoring charts; health records; children's drawings and written work; and anecdotal records from staff journals. These sources of information provide

plan for triangulated EI data collection


Parent Education Programme records: discussions; parents work; questions
Anecdotal records: observations of parents- child interaction; playgroups
Child development records: developmental assessment; growth monitoring; health records
How do families take care of young children?
PLA: village mapping; health chart; matrix, calendar; ECCD
Time use charts: parents; children
Family books
Videos, photos of family activities
Interviews: open-ended/structured, with children; with parents; with staff
Staff logbooks: livelihood activities; organisation of cooperative
Communities caring for children
PLA: gender Workload
PEP: livelihood project documents; photos; videos
Minutes of meetings: people's organisation; staff
PLA: community timeline; mobility map; household; sitio mapping
PEP: curriculum records; staff logbooks
Interviews: village elders; parents; other children
PLA: agricultural map; seasonal calendar cropping; hunger and abundance
Case studies: parent volunteers/ parent-teachers; community-based staff
existing documents
introduced within the EI

details about programme activities and, in part, about programme impact on children, on families and on the community.

A consideration of this information led us to identify what was missing, and to identify and develop the right processes to gather in that data – to produce new tools for the tool kit.

To learn from all of this – data as well as processes – we developed a data triangulation plan (see example on this page). In using this, we were able to generate more questions that were pursued both for purposes of understanding 'effectiveness' and for planning the next steps in the 'action research' agenda that EI has allowed COLF to develop and pursue. More important, the process is now significantly informing and providing directions for the planning of the final phase and the preparation of a three-year project proposal for the two programme sites.

How it worked in practice

The following examples about learning to read and write, and about

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> *Learning to read and write cannot be done as something parallel or nearly parallel to the illiterates' reality. Hence, as we have said, the learning process demands an understanding of the deeper meaning of the word. More than writing and reading 'the wing is of the bird', illiterate learners must see the need for another learning process: that of 'writing' about one's life, 'reading' about one's reality. This is not feasible if learners fail to take history in hand and make it themselves – given that history can be made and remade.* (Paolo Freire)

ensuring health for all, give a sense of how weaving the EI into the Pinatubo programme worked in practice, and shows some of the unexpected outcomes that resulted from using particular processes.

The creation of family books shows how an EI tool was integrated into the parent education programme. By telling the story of each family and building a community-created and owned literacy resource, the goals of supporting parents as adult learners, and of documenting the experiences of families are both achieved. Another example is what we have learned from a series of health-related PLA activities. This work addressed a major problem that is critical to the young child's well-being and provided some insights into programme impact on parents as caregivers. These activities were introduced within EI as a practical problem-solving process to strengthen both the parents and the programme itself.

Example 1: learning to read and to write their lives: stories of families as caregivers
The parents specifically asked for a literacy component within the programme from the outset. And, because the programme was early childhood care and development (ECCD) centred, it was natural to focus the literacy work on ECCD. In fact, ECCD provided both the conceptual and practical content of the work and the motivation for the parents to follow it through. More than that, COLF saw this work and its ECCD focus as being a major force within the community's social development process because its function was essentially to bring about social change: to improve the quality of care for young children within the family and the community. In addition, the writing process in itself is analogous to a researchers' thinking processes and this is an excellent way of enabling the parents and the older children in the family to be actively involved as 'researchers' within EI.

COLF's approach to this work was greatly influenced and informed by the many years of exploring and applying the 'whole language approach' in teaching children how to read, write and use language to communicate in various ways. Combining the writers' workshop process and a literature-based reading programme with other more 'traditional' ways of teaching children how to read and write (for example, through the use of phonics, word recognition, decoding and analysis) has always been an exciting adventure for the children and teachers at COLF. This was of course also implemented with children in the Pinatubo programme. But, for the first time, these principles and strategies were also used with adult learners who wanted to learn to read and write alongside their children. The principles were applied on the basis of the relaxed, informal storytelling and conversation about family activities that is also part of the Pinatubo programme. This produced many opportunities for parents to create their own books – for example, about traditional herbal cures, about their children's experiences, about their immediate environment, their community and history.

In practice, informal group dialogue, along with more intimate interpersonal interaction with individual parents, allowed them to identify and frame questions, identify problems, and analyse the enabling factors as well as the obstacles to the provision of 'good quality care' for their own children. This was integral to what Freire has called the process of *concientización* – by learning more about their own children and their families, the parents become more aware of and truly conscious about the social, cultural, economic and political realities that they confront daily, and go on to address their current and emerging

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needs and interests. Overall, the PEP curriculum integrates all the key elements in this process of *concientización*, while the literacy component is a major element in making it real.

The writing process for the family books has a number of elements.

1. *Focusing.* Focusing on the family books actually started with the brainstorming on the EI theme 'Families caring for children' and was followed by brainstorming on stories about their own families. Parents then brainstormed on questions that would guide their writing process. These included: What are the things we want to share with others about our own family? Who are we? What do we do? What are our problems? How do we solve them? How do we take care of one another? This involved making lists: of questions, of people and their activities, of needs, problems and solutions.

2. *Gathering and Remembering.* Parents, staff and children gathered information from many sources, including time use charts which were introduced within the EI. For the writing of family books, they recorded their notes on their family's activities in notebooks, and in the process created a kind of 'living book' about their family experiences.

3. *Organising and analysing.* The group spent several sessions talking about their notes and how they would organise these into a story about their families – one that would make sense to themselves and to their readers who were other community members. They also spent time taking these ideas apart and talking about what they meant to their lives as a family. They then began to choose text which would be accompanied by drawings, and some took pictures of their families.

4. *Elaborating, integrating, summarising.* As they wrote the first drafts using their notes, they elaborated on their initial ideas, combined information, condensed it, selected what they considered important, and discarded what they did not consider as important. The decisions were entirely theirs. After the full story had been written

Here and following page: examples from family books

When my parents and big sister go up to the mountains, I am left behind to take care of Kassandra, my little sister. I feed her, I bathe her and we play with other children. When Rita arrives from the daycare, I feed her first while I carry Kassandra. Then we play with other kids.

Before I go to school, we take a bath in the river with other kids. We race with one another and have a lot of fun!

We can now eat two to three meals a day. When my parents can sell charcoal in town, we can even buy fish!

Every Thursday morning, my mother cooks food for the children in the COLF playgroup. We enjoy playing with the toys that Madam made. Madam helps my sister Rebecca with her homework.

When someone in my family gets sick, we get help from COLF, also to look for medicine. Once my father was very sick and could not walk. They helped us bring him to the doctor and he got well.

de la Cruz family, as told by Margie, daughter.

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My youngest child studies at the COLF centre every morning. I also study through the PEP and help also with the children in the playgroup. In joining the PEP, I learned many things especially about discipline and my children. I like attending workshops with COLF.

My children learn a lot, like writing their names, the shapes, numbers and letters. When my husband comes home from work he plays with our children. He, Jonas and James especially like to play with the ball.

....

At night before we sleep, we help the older children with their assignment and school projects so they can do well in school. Even if my husband is tired he manages to make time for our children.

Feria Family as told by Jane, mother.

l with spelling of words and other
obs.

al stage involved 'publishing'
putting together the drawings
in clear handwriting - usually

ss progressed, it became clear that
d the products were yielding very
ficant insights about their
es, about individual members and
ir roles as family members, about
eir children and each other, and
hip with the programme and with

COLF. Some evidence also emerged about programme impact on their lives. These results demonstrate what processes such as those involved in producing family books can reveal. They also explain why family books are used as a tool and a source of information for the exploration of both Pinatubo's major EI themes: 'Families caring for children' and 'Communities caring for families'.

The thinking processes involved in the writing process as summarised above, in every way parallel important steps or stages in action research. The writing process itself was designed to be an activity that enabled people to participate actively in learning about their own families, analysing and reflecting on their experiences

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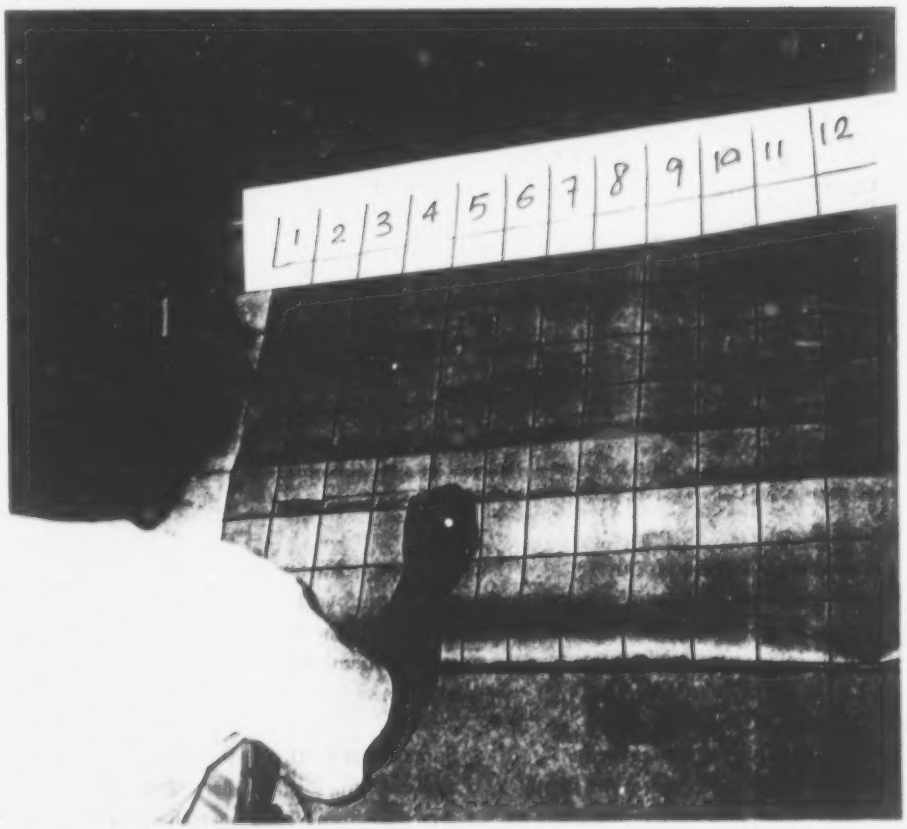
using a 'medium' or activity with which they were already very comfortable.

Example 2: communities caring for children's health for all

Health-related issues have posed the greatest challenge for COLF from the start: parents found it difficult to address and to change the practices and living conditions that caused childhood illnesses or fuelled the vicious cycles of malnutrition and childhood diseases. Thus, in the early stages of planning, health was chosen as a focus of collective problem-solving. It was also chosen as one of the ways in which participation in the EI could have a direct impact on strengthening parents as individual caregivers, as well as members of the community.

Tools were adapted from materials on PLA and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and planned within the structure of the parent education programme. A workshop on health was convened in which parents identified and plotted out the occurrence of illnesses affecting family members over a 12 month period. They then analysed the data to discover: which illnesses affected large numbers of children at particular times; why certain illnesses seemed to be rampant at certain times of the year; and which illnesses were serious and required intervention beyond care at home.

At a subsequent workshop, parents discussed causes of illnesses and also developed a Curative Chart from the health calendar that listed what measures could be taken to treat a particular illness. The chart included: the use of traditional remedies; the need for a primary health worker; the need for clinic or hospital-based interventions. They then classified these interventions and constructed a curative matrix. In the process they also discussed which interventions were effective or not, and which ones were more convenient or were less accessible to them and for what reasons. They also debated the harmful effects of certain interventions, the matter of timing and appropriateness of interventions, including when to seek help beyond home remedies and the traditional healer *(albulario)* or village health worker, and discussed and listed the difficulties encountered with each of these.



Philippines: *incidence of sickness indicated on a bar graph matrix*
photo: Community of Learners Foundation, COLF / Mount Pinatubo Project

ures. Small group discussion on the severity and incidence of the 18 most common illnesses in the resettlement area
). Community of Learners Foundation (COLF) / Mount Pinatubo Project

next stage involved local
kshops to elaborate on the issues
ed so far and what could be done
ut them.

result the 'Health Fence' was
oduced. This helps to prevent
lth problems and protect the family
nbers, especially children. These
workshops yielded valuable and significant information, as shown by this excerpt from the notes of four COLF staff members about one workshop.

Some of the mothers were talking while waiting for the other parents to arrive. Adeling was telling Isabel and Apang that she had just been to the health centre before going to the workshop that afternoon.

Adeling: *There were many patients, most of them with diarrhoea, but the doctor was not there and the midwife said he was not coming. And the midwife couldn't do much nor give them anything. All I wanted was to ask for oral hydration tablets.*

Apang: *But since then, they never have had enough medicines in the health centre and the doctor does not go there regularly. It's better to bring our children to the hospital before the diarrhoea worsens.*

Adeling: *Yes, but what would happen if the patient is almost dehydrated; we are so far from the hospital.*

Isabel: *But before you bring the child to the hospital, you should give him 'orcsol' (a rehydrating tablet to be dissolved in water). Or you can boil avocado leaves in water and let him drink that. There's an avocado tree in Julie's house. I'll accompany you later, let's ask her for some leaves.*

Adeling: *That's right, I'll do that. Aside from saving me a lot, it's all natural.*

Thelma: *You can also give your child the ABC formula – avocado leaves, bayabas (Filipino for guava) and calamansi (native lemon). I've tried this many times with my children and it works.*

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During the workshop, the parents also talked more about the causes of many illnesses and how to prevent them, sharing information about previous practices and agreeing upon concrete steps that had to be taken. Although much of this information had already been introduced in previous ECE sessions from the first year of the programme, it was still considered necessary because the health problems were recurring. On the process of using the ECE workshops to revisit this topic, the parents had the following to say:

Nora: I learned more things about ways of treating certain illnesses and how to avoid sickness through this process of sharing with other parents. It helps! Knew one way, now I have more options.

Angeling: What others know, others are learning about.

Glen: We're helping each other to plan for ways of avoiding illness. It helps to recall what we've learned and to think of more ways to help each other.

Nyang: This is very helpful for me because I learned more by relating and analysing how certain illnesses occur at certain times of the year. Somehow, I will know better how to prevent it or what will work to relieve the symptoms and cure the illness.

The COLF community-based staff also felt it was helpful – especially at this stage of the programme – to:

- engage in a process that helped them to focus more directly on continuing and emerging needs;
- acknowledge and respect the pace at which parents learn or apply what they have learned; and
- offer support for individual parents, to build on the strengths of their group interaction and nurture the support system that exists among them.

They realised how important it is to look at things from the perspective of the learners, and they welcomed the workshops as a way of strengthening the programme and ensuring that its goals would be fulfilled.

Conclusions

It is clear that the Pinatubo programme's basic approaches and methodologies made it an ideal partner for the Effectiveness Initiative: the EI worked harmoniously through what was naturally right for the programme and was able to reach into the heart of its work. This is clear in both of the examples presented. As well as fulfilling their original objectives, the programme's basic approaches and methodologies have also provided insights into how children, parents and project workers had benefited from the Pinatubo programme. For example: parental participation in the programme has been shown to have developed over the years and they became active partners in the programme's development; relationships between parents and workers have become much more open and relaxed (high 'comfort level'); and COLF has developed its understanding of the interpersonal dynamics within the groups of parents as it seeks to understand the programme's impact on the lives of the people.

This emphasis on the personal and interpersonal – on a real coming together to work together – is heartening in terms of the Pinatubo programme's approach. It is through the quality of human relationships that are nurtured at the community level that it is possible to assess whether an organisation and its programme has lived up to its goals of 'living and learning' with the people they set out to serve. ○

notes

1. 585 children aged 0 to 3, 120 children aged 4 to 6 and 449 children aged 7 to 17 among these families are regular programme participants. The families live in 10 *sitios* (smallest unit of a rural village) in Kalangitan (Baguingan, Gayaman, Manabayukan, Malasa, Maruglo, Binyayan, San Martin, Flora, Kalangitan, Mabilog). In Loob-Bunga, they live in 8 *sitios* (Mambog, Dangla, Mayamban, Kayanga, Burgos, Belbel, Bareto, Victory).
2. A final 3-year, DWHH funded, phase 5 of the programme will be implemented from the end of 2001 through 2004. It will focus on strengthening the local people's organisation, cooperatives and the parents' management of the ECCD programme and livelihood activities.

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Portugal: reflections about the Águeda Movement and the Effectiveness Initiative

Rui d'Espiney

The author is Executive Director of the Instituto das Comunidades Educativas (ICE) in Portugal. In this article he discusses the origins of the Águeda Movement and its special approach to developing a community-based organisation: its original nature; its spirit of seeking; its non-conformity; its independence. He goes on to discuss the ways in which the Águeda Movement's involvement in the Effectiveness Initiative has helped it to revalidate and reinforce the key qualities, attitudes and approaches that appear to have helped to ensure not only its effectiveness, but also its longevity.

Nobody is born, or grows up, completely alone

Following the fall of the dictatorship in April 1974, Portugal entered an epoch of social explosion, especially in the big cities, in the industrial heartlands of Lisbon and Porto, in the fields of the South and – not least – in many of the urban centres of the coast and the interior. It was a time of great enthusiasm: people joined together spontaneously, believing that, by their will to do and act, they would bring about the end of exploitation and oppression. And in this way efforts multiplied, here to support the redistribution of land or the fight against illiteracy, there to counter the power of a manager from the old regime.

It was at this time, in this climate, and with this spirit, that the Águeda Movement was born in the barrios of the town of Águeda, organising itself around specific objectives that included the support of handicapped young children. Unlike most groups in other parts of the country, it wasn't rooted in the political forces that were born and began to develop at that time: its supporters were independent of political parties. But like so many others, it is undoubtedly a true son of what we call the 'Revolution of the carnations', of the energies that were freed, of the 'Enough is enough' attitude that emerged after 50 years of a lack of freedom, of repression and of fear. Like the others, it was fed by generosity, by delivering, by belief in change – and it too cut through legal constraints (by occupying a house for the benefit of young children), confronted resistance (by writing articles for newspapers and intervening in meetings), and pushed for support (by organising petitions and putting forwards its demands).

And as the country stirred and began to recreate itself, so the Águeda Movement began to grow, sometimes contributing to new ways that the country was mapping out, sometimes using the models of others.

That was how it was ...

The social explosion that followed the 25th of April was carried forward two years later when the State achieved political control, reorganised itself and sought political definition in all the various areas in which it operates. And, as it did so, it sought out those who had been operating successfully so it could learn from their experiences.

The Águeda Movement was one such source of know-how. Its perspectives on integrating handicapped infants into society were much valued; and its promoters were invited to act rather like trainers in the fora and gatherings that were helping to outline new legislation. It was a time in which the Águeda Movement enjoyed a recognition that reinforced its identity, its self-esteem and the confidence between its members; and that gave it more opportunities for reflection.

But realities change. The State tends to consolidate things, to replace models that offer options with models that impose, that are stereotyped or adulterated, and that owe little to the

essence of the models that it originally found so inspiring. Like other groups in other domains who saw their proposals stripped of their sense, the Águeda Movement was confronted with an official policy for the integration of disadvantaged children that, in practice, was centred on bringing them into line with non-handicapped young children. It had little to do with integrating them in ways that drew on what they could contribute.

The Águeda Movement did not give up. Instead, it recreated itself and – like other groups – disassociated itself from the State to seek community-based alternatives to official policies on integration that it saw as non-viable. In the barrios of the town of Águeda, where higher than average numbers of handicapped children are born, community groups function *de facto* as spaces for the development of alternatives in integrated development.

A case of effectiveness

The Águeda Movement can be seen as unique in comparison with many other groups that were born in 1974. Unique not just because it has survived but because it has stayed true to its original nature: its spirit of seeking; its non-conformity; its independence; and its innovation. In my opinion, it is still too early to fully understand this longevity – that is one of the results that we expect from the investigations within the Effectiveness Initiative (EI). But, from reflections so far, it is possible to propose at least three sets of reasons for the Águeda Movement's survival and success.

In the first place, there is the undoubted contribution of subjectivity and emotion to the life of the Movement, right from the beginning. Other groups born at the same time were structured around political battles. It wasn't so much that passion was absent from such groups, more that their underlying motivation was to do with a concept, a vision of society. In contrast, the Águeda Movement included the inconvenient: the emotions of the people who generated and worked along with the programme. Reason was there, but a reason made subjective by emotion, by the emotional rejection of the injustice that exclusion represents.

A second set of explanations for the longevity of the Movement is to do with the close relationships between all those who benefited – the handicapped young people themselves. This stems from a concern for the well-being of another person, and from recognising the strengths and abilities of that other person. This is what has guided the Movement's promoters from the first. More than being something *for people*, the Movement was *with people*. Linked to this is the fact that people grew within the programme and became confident by constructing solutions and ways of acting or reacting. In doing so, they also became more committed to the programme.

The majority of the organisations that started out at the same time as the Águeda Movement wanted power. But, in contrast with the Águeda Movement, they sought to do so through the ideas and proposals that they had come up with, not so much through the people whom they sought to benefit.

A third set of reasons centres on the fact that the character of the programme was justified by, and grew out of, what it did and how it did it. One core factor is that the Águeda Movement organised itself for concrete action, finding immediate solutions that derived from the local circumstances, needs and possibilities. These were solutions that did not depend on options imposed from outside, or the decisions of people who were external to the context. In this way, the Movement grew both in what it achieved and in how it achieved that.

In many other organisations, even those that focused on concrete concerns (for example: ending the colonial war in Mozambique; or redistribution of lands), solutions came not from the local level but from above. Such solutions were short term rather than long term, and also worked against community mobilisation.

Naturally, there are other factors that need to be taken into account – for example, the Movement's non-conformity and the perseverance of its promoters in the face of all the difficulties they encountered. All these factors contribute to explaining the Movement's longevity, its ability to change 'No' into 'Yes', and its attempts to overcome obstacles through innovation and development. Other groups knew about such factors too but

Portugal: support to families from Timor (Instituto das Comunidades Educativas – ICE)
photo: Teresa Moreno, Bernard van Leer Foundation

did not really take them to heart or give them their due importance. As a result, these factors did not have the influence that they should have had.

An external look at an internal process

After an initial process that defined and built the Águeda Movement, it was launched as a kind of fabric that consisted of autonomous but interwoven initiatives, formal and informal, that were made up of spaces and times (some programmed in, some *ad hoc*) for action and reflection. In addition – and unlike what happened in other groups and organisations – the financial support that it received (for example, that from the Aga Khan Foundation) helped it to grow and to keep going.

It is because of such attributes that the Águeda Movement almost had a duty to take part in the EI as an example of effectiveness. But, curiously, the call to participate in the EI coincided with a time in which the Movement was passing through a crisis: people were getting stuck in routines, separated from each other by the demands of the mass of activities that they had to animate, and dulled by the daily rhythm of meetings and exchanges. Also the sharing of passion and affection that had helped to make the Movement what it was, was fading away.

Given these conditions, the participation of the Águeda Movement in the EI had to take two worries into account, or rather, had to pursue two objectives simultaneously. Handled badly, this could have led to conflict.

On the one hand there was the need to re-link the Movement again with its own unique identity. For the members of the Águeda Movement, therefore, the EI was not seen as a research project but an opportunity to (re)construct the emotions, intentions, values and actions of the Movement. It was not enough to just involve all the actors, they had to be promoted as the owners of the knowledge, knowledge that was not merely *about* action but that was actually *for* action, that was not just about the past but also about the future that it would help to weave.

In short, it was necessary to embed the EI in the Águeda Movement in ways that would allow the (re)creation of its synergies and power.

On the other hand there was the need for distance, for the external view that any enquiry implies. It was a matter of bringing outside perspectives to bear, and creating more objective spaces in which the results of these could be reflected on.

Resolving these contradictory objectives involved blending enquiry with strategic action. To use Andaloussi's terminology:

> *... a collective work that conceives, organises, carries out, analyses and evaluates the process that is going on.*[1]

In this, the 'process' is not just that of the EI but more that of the Águeda Movement; and the intention was an enquiry that would ...

> *... articulate explanations, commitments and applications.*[2]

What is meant by this is the reasons, the affection and the actions.

In practice, what was proposed and carried out was that people involved in the investigation should grow through the solutions that they produced, feel ownership of them, and feed them back into the realities in which they work. But they should also rediscover what had united them in the past: that affection that was once central to the Movement, and that they consciously recovered during their journey of investigation. Throughout the process, they also had to hold the balance between what was emerging from the perspective of insiders, and what was emerging from the outsider's viewpoint.

From group to team: the role of the outsider

From the beginning, the EI encountered problems in working with an Águeda EI team. The Águeda Movement always functioned as a kind of 'extended family' whose members met each other when problems arose and tried to find solutions to them. There wasn't a core group, and it wasn't easy to create one. That meant that the EI lacked a nucleus to sustain the continuity of its investigation. But, in truth, to have had a core group would have been against the culture of the organisation.

The solution was a challenge: an open group, flexible in composition, that was directed by ongoing reflections about the processes and outcomes of the investigation, rather than by any imposed preconceptions. But it produced results: despite rotation among its eight to ten members, it was stable and moved forward progressively and cohesively.

The group questioned the need for outsiders, as proposed by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. It felt that the presence of outsiders would distort the investigation. This was not because they were outsiders *per se* but, above all, because of the weight that the views of outsiders could have – especially if an outsider was given the role of team leader, as the Foundation proposed.

This was resolved by a mixture of good sense, learning about the kinds of attitudes that outsiders might have, and then reinforcing in all members of the EI team a set of standpoints that would help to keep the investigation balanced.

These were:

- identification with the objectives and problems of the Movement;
- emotional empathy with the Movement;
- holding a balance between the external and the internal in the group's reflection (sometimes returning findings for reflection, sometimes reflecting on the findings themselves);
- maintaining respect in listening to each member of the group, and respecting their rhythms; and
- successfully facing the challenge of the ongoing effort of taking the 'problemising' approach to action and reality.

Last words

Through its participation in the EI, the Águeda Movement has reconstructed its identity. It recognises itself, once again, in the battle against the exclusion of handicapped young people. This has allowed it to reposition itself in that battle, as it has devised collective reactions to new forms of exclusion. Today, it can be said to have an almost mystical sense of duty, one that welcomes challenges.

The Movement seized the opportunity that the EI offered and, as the agent of its own development, transformed itself in line with what it has discovered about itself through the EI.

In looking for the always unfinished and always unique story of the Águeda Movement, I am reminded – mischievously – of Cervantes' words:

There is no power on earth
That could possibly aspire
To change the world
Once time has passed ... ○

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India: Self Employed Women's Association

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India began by running childcare centres for women working in the informal sector, who needed centres that flexibly met their needs. It shifted from simply providing a valuable service to women, to focusing on high quality childcare; and the programme has expanded rapidly in reaction to massive demand while still holding quality. This article discusses techniques and tools that have been and are being developed and employed as SEWA – a strong, well established and effective organisation – has used the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) and its processes to improve its approaches and operations.

SEWA has used the outcomes of its involvement in the EI to strengthen its own capacity and its operational competence. This is parallel to what has happened in the Philippines (page 22), and in Portugal (page 32). In doing so, SEWA has employed a variety of techniques to identify needs for training and for tools to support the development of expertise among the childcare workers.

Teachers' diaries
Teachers now write daily diaries that are then shared with others at a monthly in-service meeting. While at the present time these are somewhat limited in terms of what is included in the diary, SEWA expects to support a gradual evolution of this tool to centre more on activities and issues. One current restriction is that writing is not a common activity for the childcare providers; it will take time before they can record in a more meaningful way.

Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)
PLA tools have generated a very positive response from the SEWA EI team. So far they have used pie charts (here they are called roti charts) and matrices. One use of the roti chart technique included parents who, together with staff, looked at the costs of running childcare, breaking these down into the various items that need to be paid for. They then looked at how much (the slices of the roti) was paid for by parent fees and government subsidies, and this revealed the gap that had to be covered from other sources. One of the immediate outcomes was that the parents decided the fees needed to be raised from 15 Rupees they were paying per month to 20 Rupees. The staff felt that these visual techniques were extremely useful with parents and teachers, and are planning to use more of them.

Local committees
To strengthen work in the individual centres, committees of local people have been formed. Members have been trained in how to operate a centre (for example: how to keep track of funds; manage the centre; operate a quality programme; and so on). These committees have been strengthened considerably, and are gaining skills to become much more self-reliant in operational terms. However, given the economics of the populations that the centres serve, they are unlikely to ever become sustainable economically.

Technical Teams
To support the development of training activities, Technical Teams have been created. These consist of supervisors, leaders of the unions of women who are associated with childcare, and SEWA staff. The teams develop future activities, and oversee the training and in-service process. They meet monthly and, in addition to handling routine administrative concerns, pertinent topics from field experience are presented and discussed.

Spearhead Teams
To complement the Technical Teams, existing Spearhead Teams have been employed to strengthen the women's unions and help to guide their activities. The composition of the Spearhead Teams is 80 percent union members and 20 percent SEWA staff .

Children's profiles
Histories of children's involvement in the centres are now being supplemented with photographs. This will help SEWA

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to follow some of these children over time, since they will have a photographic record of who the child was when he/she began in the programme. Mothers have responded to this very enthusiastically.

Tracer activities

SEWA is undertaking a number of initiatives to follow-up children who have been through its centres. One of these is to look at how children are doing in terms of schooling following their experience in the childcare centres. To get a gross measure of tracing, SEWA staff organised two 'melas' (fairs) in which all the children who had 'graduated' from the centres came together for a day of games and celebration. Many hundreds attended.

Linked to this – and to the children's profiles – is work by an American post-graduate student on placement with SEWA to tell the stories of eight children. This will include a write up of who the child is, the kind of family the child comes from, and so on; and will be accompanied by photos of the child at home and in school.

Although this follow-up of children is only operating at a fairly simple level at the moment, there is the potential for a more systematic tracing of children who participated in the programme. This would need a full-fledged project. One challange is that SEWA has no baseline data on the children who have passed through its centres, nor do they have comparison possibilities, since they would have no access to villages where the children did not go to a childcare centre. However SEWA is beginning a programme for adolescent girls in new villages, and it will gather profiles of these girl's histories when they enter the programme. This might provide indications of what would have happened to the SEWA children if they had not participated in the SEWA childcare programme.

Nutrition campaign

As part of its EI participation, SEWA looked at children's nutritional records in the centres. They discovered several things: that some teachers were using the growth scale inaccurately and so had a poor sense of the children's nutritional status; and that some teachers were good at collecting the data, but did not know what to do with the results. In several centres there was, in fact, a negative growth curve for many children. SEWA responded by having staff who were known to families stay with a number of them for 24 hours and record the quality and quantity of food available, how it was cooked, the families' eating patterns, and how the food was distributed. They discovered:

- that the food was balanced nutritionally, but there was not enough of it;
- that the family never ate together – in fact, men and boys ate first, followed by women and girls; and
- that food was distributed unequally, with men and boys getting most, and women and girls getting the remainder.

As a result, SEWA is beginning a nutrition campaign to make people more aware of how they can prepare their current foods in a more nutritional way, and to encourage families to eat together and share food more equitably.

Work with children in times of disaster

There have been two major disasters during the time the EI has been in place. In fact SEWA talks about the timing of the EI as beginning with a major cyclone and taking root at the time of a major earthquake – two interesting elements in a timeline! EI participation, and the kinds of processes that go with it, were therefore in play as SEWA gained a mass of experience in what providing childcare can mean in a time of disaster. Two key areas of interest here are bringing services and some 'normality' to children's lives, and the ways in which childcare can become the focus for community activities. In both disasters, SEWA centres became central points for food distribution, feeding, and health services. In addition, they served as 'schools' when the formal schools were destroyed. Older children joining in the activities in the centres created a kind of child-to-child effect.

Policy actions

After a year and a half of working with India's Central Welfare Board, SEWA has convinced them that childcare centres that charge fees should also be eligible to receive state aid, if the population being served is unable to pay the full costs of the service. This has set a precedent.

Pay and working conditions

SEWA is committed to, and working towards, paying its childcare workers India's national minimum wage and bringing working hours into line with the needs of working women.

Overall, participation in the EI has given SEWA new ways to look at its work. It has created tools and processes that have generated an on-going process of reflection, leading to new and more effective actions. ○

Peru: the role of the animator: the complex interface between PRONOEI *and community*

Fiorella Lanata Piazzon

The author is an anthropologist who joined the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) Peru team to coordinate the gathering and analysis of data from PRONOEI *in Puno.* PRONOEI *is the acronym for Programas no Escolarizados de Educación Inicial, one of the earliest initial education programmes in Latin America. In this article, the author discusses an investigation into how parents of young children saw the programme and its animators, and how these perceptions affected the programme's effectiveness.*

In April 2000, we completed an investigation in four communities in Puno, the region in the South of Peru from which the PRONOEI programme originated. The point of the investigation was to learn lessons from PRONOEI's accumulated experience with community animators and – especially – to find out how effective the community animators had been in the eyes of families. To do this, we selected two Quechua-speaking and two Aymará-speaking communities; and a team of anthropologists ran a workshop with parents from each community to gather information about various aspects of the programme. In addition, the anthropologists carried out observations and interviews to deepen their understanding of the themes that most interested the families.

The work of the team was based on three questions.

1. What were the objectives of the programme, as the families saw them?
2. How did they see the profile and roles of the animator?
3. How did these perceptions impact on the effectiveness of the PRONOEI programme?

Outcomes 1: PRONOEI and its objectives

From the answers the families gave to the first question, the team assembled two sets of descriptive words and short phrases.

PRONOEI as an education programme: *'part of education', 'progress', 'reading and writing'*, and so on.

PRONOEI as a social programme of daily care for children *'it helps us', 'happiness', 'house of children', 'play'*, and so on.

Overall, the answers fuse together into one single definition: 'PRONOEI is a *home* where children *learn*'.

In Peru, the idea of education as the means for people to achieve progress is deeply ingrained in rural populations. Thus, it is no surprise that in the investigation, the word 'education', together with words such as 'progress', 'development' and 'future', are associated with PRONOEI – and therefore with formal education. People see education as the start of a road that, ideally, helps them to improve themselves, leave the communities and cultures that they were born into, and become part of wider society and the national culture. They think that education produces progress.

In the eyes of parents, the role of PRONOEI in the social development of children, and its role in their motor-cognitive development (something that is much more about formal education) were seen as intertwined, inextricably linked. In order that children can be educated they have to attend some kind of school or centre, and this implies a great deal of previous social learning. For example, they have to be used to being away from their families, with other children and under the supervision of a stranger.

But the advantages that the parents see in the PRONOEI programme are not just

of an educational nature: they are also about preparation for life. Spanish, for example, is a necessary tool for formal schooling but is also important in many social and economic senses as well. Parents concluded that 'children who are confined to their homes are children who are standing still'. It is in PRONOEI that they have their first contacts with others and begin the process of adapting to the education system.

Using illustrations and stories about days in lives of children, parents showed the ways in which their children benefited from the PRONOEI programme – and also showed what they felt was lost by those children who did not participate. Children who did not participate were shown as dirty, unkempt, sad, abandoned – in one case a child was represented as an orphan! In contrast, children who did attend the programme were shown as happy, playing with their companions, clean and tidy, alive and sharp.

> *Children who don't go, don't know what day it is, always play alone. They can hardly mix with other people because they are almost like little savages or animals. It's because they are afraid of people.*
>
> *Its as if they are locked up in their homes. But those who attend the PRONOEI programme know how to read, identify trees, distinguish colours. They call the animator 'teacher'. They build up their confidence together.*
>
> *In the Children's House they are taught to behave and to interact with others – become civilised. Here, those that have fear, learn to lose their fear. It is as if they were in their own homes, learning to play and talk without fear. That leaves us to concentrate on helping them acquire more knowledge.*
>
> *They know their companions and where they can safely go together. Those that don't attend the programme just walk with their dogs, only know Quechua. They also fear people and animals, don't mix easily with others. When they get to school, they don't know how to hold a pencil, how to write, don't understand the teacher.*

Although PRONOEI is officially called an initial education programme, parents see it more as place where children are cared for each day. Parents who think that formal education is poor (perhaps because they themselves started their own education when they were older) ask if older children can also take part in the programme.

> *It's good for those who do go: they have a good time ... But what about the children who are always on the street with nowhere to play. Suddenly, their parents want to take them all to the plaza and leave them there because it's not so dangerous.*

Other evidence that parents value the daily care aspect of PRONOEI is the fact that a number of them indicated that the opening times of the centres should match up with their own hours of work, so that they can collect their children after work, or be at home ready to received them.

Outcomes 2: expectations of the role of the animator

Through drama, the parents presented their perceptions of what a typical day in each centre is like, and how to obtain resources. From this, it was possible to discover what they felt about the animators and the implications of this in practice.

The general role of the animator emerged as to teach the children, making them learn things. Because of this, it is very important that they are friends with the children – but not so much that they lose control. They have to be able to maintain order at the same time as keeping the children happy. For the parents, the most important thing was learning to write. Reading, knowing vowels, knowing Spanish, and having a school certificate were also mentioned, but with less frequency.

There were many other replies not related to formal education about what the animator should provide. We call these 'family care' elements because they are the kinds of things that a mother typically does with/for her children. These include: making recommendations; caring for them; toileting them and training them to toilet themselves; teaching them their names and addressing them by name or by their relationship or kinship to

others; and making sure that they are fed properly. But the function that parents most expect from the animator is to help children lose their fear of being away from their parents. This is linked to helping them adapt, at this half way stage between home and school, to meeting unknown people and dealing with new rules.

Parents also expected the animators to establish good relationships with them. The animators have responsibility for the well-being of the building in which the programme operates. That means that they have to devise and sustain activities that maintain and repair the building, and that replenish the materials that the children use. Parents expect animators to have meetings with them in which such things can be discussed, and to organise obligatory work days to make games for the children. In two of the communities, it was obvious that the animators had made at least half of the games themselves.

The animators are also responsible for attracting children to the programme. When a centre closed, it was because not enough children attended. When this happened, the parents blamed it on the disinterest of the animator. The opinion of parents is that the animator must motivate the community in every way:

> *... she has to animate the community to ensure that the building is repaired. That will help us to respect her as a good animator ... She must drive these activities along and gain the respect of the community. If she does this, we parents will commit ourselves to working with her for years.*

Parents frequently made remarks about formal aspects of being an animator. These included: 'that she keeps good time'; and 'that she is prepared for work and, above all, is a responsible person'. But what does it mean for an animator to be responsible? Some parents defined this as being present in the centre from the moment of opening until it closes. Many expected more: that the animators should collect the children from their homes in the morning and take them back there at the end of the day – and if the parents had not yet returned, then to take the children to their own homes until the parents return from work and could collect their children.

In response to the profile that the animator needs if the programme is to work well, a small group of parents wanted the animator to come from outside the community because she would be 'better prepared'. However, the great majority wanted their animators to come from their own community. The reasons given were: that they would have the time; that good communications between them and the parents would be easier to maintain (necessary to promote good parental participation in the programme); that they could count on the support of their own community; and, above all, that they would be people who could support families, especially in accompanying children between their homes and the centres.

Other advantages in having a local animator included: better cooperation between them and the parents in other community activities; and better control by the community over the animator's work. In addition, parents felt that local animators were more appropriate to help children make the transition from home to the centre in which the PRONOEI programme operates because the children would already know them.

Taking the four communities together, it was clear that the communities in which the animator was an outsider wanted them to be more responsible people. In contrast, the communities that had a local animator wanted them to be better educators. A number of mothers had thought about taking their children away from the programme because of the irresponsibility of the non-local animators; yet other parents wanted local animators to be more like the non-locals.

> *We want the animators to teach our children well and we would like to monitor this and have some control ... she wants to teach them all to write neatly and well. But first they should learn to recognise colours, then to write.*

> *We could help the animators, give them advice about teaching our children well. If not, our children will not do well when they go to formal school and this will mean that the prestige of her and our community remains low.*

> *Teach the bigger ones to write, and the small ones to play.*

Reflections

According to the parents consulted during this investigation, the ideal role for animators is mostly about formal education. This made us reflect about the perceptions that they have about the effectiveness of the programme, given what this must mean about their expectations.

What has emerged is that they see two roles for the animators: one oriented to education; the other to the social development of their children and the maintenance of what it means to be a person growing up in these traditional communities. At first sight these two findings do not seem to be in conflict – in fact, they complement each other. But the problems arise in practice: in trying to guarantee one of these, the other may be jeopardised. In the eyes of the communities, non-local animators may be better prepared yet may also be irresponsible in that they do not respond to the implicit expectations of the community (gathering the children and looking after them in the absence of the parents, for example). On the other hand, a local animator may ensure that the programme operates well in most ways yet may not be able to maintain the education at an adequate level because of the scarcity of training for them by the Ministry of Education.

Peru: parents drawing at a workshop about children who do and those who don't go to the PRONOEI preschool
photo: Servios Urbanos para Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos (SUMBI)

This is not so much an irresolvable conflict as a simple reality in these communities, one that affects the ways in which the parents appreciate and commit themselves to the programme – or not. For us, there are still some outstanding questions: How is the effectiveness of PRONOEI affected by the conflicts between the expectations of the roles and functions of the animators, and the profiles of the local and non-local animators? What is the impact of the personal strengths of the animators on the pertinence of the programme? Have do these roles and functions contribute to making PRONOEI an effective programme? ○

Colombia: an environment of credibility: a key element for effective action

Fernando Peñaranda

The author is a member of the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) team in Colombia that is investigating effectiveness in the Proyecto de Mejoramiento Educativo, de Salud y del Ambiente (PROMESA), a community mobilisation project that began 25 years ago on the isolated Pacific coast of Colombia. PROMESA was operated from 1977 to 1998 by Centro Internacional de Educación y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE), a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that carries out social, educational, and human development projects focused on the healthy development of children. From 1998, the project was operated by Centro de Investigaciones para el Desarrollo Autosostenible Local (CIDEAL), an NGO of local personnel that supports community processes.

In participating in the EI, stakeholders in PROMESA saw that it was important to find out what people consider to have been effective, and how their perceptions have changed over the years. EI work in the project consisted of a study that was carried out with participants in the PROMESA project; advisers of CINDE and of CIDEAL; other organisations with which PROMESA has coordinated activities; municipalities; and children and mothers who have used the project's services. The central question of the study was: 'What lessons have been learned during the life of the project?'

This article draws on that study to discuss what is now seen as the key importance of credibility to the effectiveness of the project, showing its relationship with other important elements that have been identified in the process of validating the information that the study is producing.

As a result of the EI study of the PROMESA project, the groups involved in the study have established that credibility is a necessity if a project is to be effective.

Information for the study was gathered by interviews and workshops with different participants in the project. This information was then analysed, and the analyses were validated by taking them back to the people who had provided the information so they could not just discuss and refine the analyses, but also add to them. This article therefore presents a way of understanding credibility and its importance from the point of view of all the stakeholders.

The theme of credibility emerged as a constant in the interrelations between all who participated in the project, serving as a model for establishing factors in effectiveness. It also led us to carry out a preliminary analysis that itself was an example for establishing relationships between other elements in the project.

The project's credibility was born in the environment of real confidence that it generated. Before PROMESA, community members really lacked confidence because they lived in a reality in which their values and knowledge had never been recognised and in which they were little valued or respected. As they saw it, their experiences with other institutions

and projects had been shaped by party political relationships and corruption, and this contributed to a climate of non-confidence and caution with others.

Once CINDE began its work, the climate began to evolve into something more favourable. Confidence in people, in the community, in the organisations and in the project grew; and the project's credibility increased as these reinforced each other and brought out each other's potential. The roots of credibility lie in the feeling in community members that they were starting to feel valued and respected by PROMESA, when, as many of them reiterated in the study,

'They believed in me'.

But why did people feel that the PROMESA project believed in them? There are four factors that can be seen as key in PROMESA: the project's nature (its philosophy, policies, methods and objectives, and the ways in which these were intended to promote people's development); the attitudes of the advisers to the project; the human relationships; and the construction of a safe learning environment. The first two of these factors are discussed in detail below; the last two recur throughout.

But it was the interrelation of these factors that produced the necessary conditions for people to feel valued because they were valued, and because their culture, their knowledge and their capabilities were recognised. In addition, being valued contributed to their sense of self-worth, something that they had previously lacked. All of this allowed them to prove to themselves and to others that they could be agents in their own transformation and in that of the environment in which they live.

The nature of the project: *'They taught us how to fish'*

The nature of the project as it is defined above, can be also established from testimonies that illustrate very well how people regarded it.

They didn't give us fish, they taught us how to fish.
We were part of ...
They trained us for action.
They never abandoned us.

The study shows that people saw education, based on a flexible model of learning that responded to people's needs and that encouraged community participation, as one of the most significant elements in driving forward personal development.

In addition, education in this form was seen as the most important and valuable element in PROMESA. Indeed it almost defined and shaped the project by allowing people to develop the knowledge and abilities necessary for them to direct the project, resolve its problems, and so on. Participation was closely linked to this and helped to carry things forward by establishing an environment in which people had opportunities to act.

Providing education and enabling participation can be understood as two sides of the same coin: on one side, strengthening people's skills and knowledge so they resolved their own problems; and on the other, generating the conditions necessary for the application of those new skills and that new knowledge in a real process of applying theory to practice. It was a matter of education for action, and for the means to carry out that action.

Within this, participative evaluation was regarded as a critically important force for learning. In an environment of mutual confidence in which relationships were constructive and people felt safe, it was possible to establish permanent mechanisms for evaluation at all levels that enabled reflection on what was being done. At the same time, the advisers – who continued to work to enhance people's skills and knowledge in evaluation – were also seen as a constant source of help, a continuing stimulus that helped to overcome people's anxieties, conflicts and uncertainties. Essentially, people had confidence in each adviser; and the advisors offered ongoing support, even when they were not there.

It is worth stressing the conviction of the different stakeholders in PROMESA that the nature of the project was a result of its inclusiveness: it directed its energies to all the people of the community, in contrast to traditional approaches in which only the most capable were selected to participate in

Colombia
photo: Centro Internacional de Educacion y Desarrollo Humano (CINDE)

coordinating action. In PROMESA, housewives and small farmers alike – with little formal preparation – were transformed into highly competent people who were able to carry out the project. Very significant in this respect is the wide recognition that the paraprofessionals earned as a result of their work and their abilities.

Attitudes and values of the advisors:
'They recognised us as people'

The institutional philosophy, as manifested in the attitudes and values of the project advisers, was seen as key in generating the environment of credibility. The stakeholders in the project reiterated the importance of horizontal relationships with the advisers, relationships that were human and warm, and based on mutual respect and on valuing local knowledge and culture. There is no doubt that these established a feeling of confidence and helped to build productive and secure learning environments.

The sensitivity of the project advisers towards the needs and problems of people, and of the community in general, were evident in many ways: the project advisers recognised the personal and cultural characteristics of the stakeholders, worked flexibly with them and, above all, kept in mind their worries and needs. Also notable were their example, their commitment and their sense of responsibility to the work, and to meeting the project's goals and objectives. In addition, the 'culture of hard work' that was established was very different from the rhythms that the stakeholders were used to. But this arduous work was carried out in a friendly and human way. Long and demanding work days revolved around group activities, thereby helping to consolidate teamwork: the people knew they could count on others to help to resolve the difficulties that arose in their daily work.

Finally, the project advisers were outstanding in the ways in which they changed their relationships with the people of the communities. Traditionally, such workers had underestimated people in poor communities because of their low

socio-economic status and because they had little formal education. This encouraged an environment of distrust and caution. Transforming these kinds of relationships into something more human and constructive bonded advisers and local people. The result was that all felt that they were working together in resolving the problems of the community.

These attitudes and ways of working were also transmitted to the leaders (the promoters; those who extended the coverage of the project; and the local advisers) and to other organisations. For example, the promoters showed it in affirming: 'We learned to reach parents' and relating this to such elements as their own flexibility, and their interest in the worries and problems of the parents. In this, they went beyond official project activities, and established spaces for parental participation.

These attitudes and values were disseminated more widely, and influenced other institutions and groups, thanks to coherence between the actions of the advisors and their philosophical premises. Teaching by example was a key factor, not only for them but also for the promoters.

Credibility of the project: *'PROMESA was not just promises'*

From the start, all stakeholders in the project were worried about achieving the proposed goals and objectives – that is, about fulfilling PROMESA's promises to the community (the acronym PROMESA is also Spanish for 'promise'). In contrast with previous projects and programmes, PROMESA was characterised by constancy and persistence, and by a 'search for other methods or other roads' to ensure success: 'PROMESA was not just promises'. In this sense, participative evaluation has been crucial, as will become clear from the next part of this article.

The fact that planning and evaluation depended on participation by representatives of all the various sectors of the community, allowed plans of action to be constructed collectively, and for the results to be fed back to the community – results relating to the achievements and difficulties; the use of resources; the successful carrying through of the programming; and the performance of the different stakeholders. Participative planning and evaluation were valuable instruments in guaranteeing that project objectives and goals were met. But they also constituted a powerful instrument of communication, ensuring that everyone knew what was happening.

All this contributed to the project being perceived as effective, efficient and transparent: people saw that 'things were done well'. Interesting in this sense are reflections about the role of CINDE that emerged from the EI study. Some years after CINDE stopped working in the area, information about children who had benefited from the preschools showed that, as young adults, few of them had remained in the community. The reason? They were studying in different universities, something that is not at all common among young people in this part of Colombia.

Overall, both the evaluation of the project and its effects reveal that CINDE cared about what happened in the lives of the people with and through whom it works.

The project's outcomes strengthened the environment of credibility

The results achieved brought about the environment of credibility, as much as did the processes through which the project reached its aims and objectives. Three elements and the ways in which they interact, have been key in constructing overall credibility: the credibility of the promoters; the credibility of the organisations and institutions involved; and the credibility of the community.

A variety of disparate factors determined the credibility of the paraprofessionals in the eyes of the community. They were obviously outstanding in terms of the level of competence they reached, their positive self image as paraprofessionals, and their skill and sense of responsibility in solving problems; and they were also appropriate interlocutors or spokespeople for the community because of their nature, abilities, knowledge, ways of establishing respectful and horizontal relations with people, and, in general, their commitment to the needs of individuals

and the community as a whole. These factors crucially underpinned their competence and their legitimacy in doing their work within the project.

The credibility of local organisations and institutions grew in the eyes of those with whom they worked – for example, in the coordination of plans, strategies and activities. Different kinds of formal, non-formal and informal training contributed to this, especially training that emphasised promoting relationships that were more human, more respectful and more productive. Likewise, the coordination that was achieved between some organisations and institutions (which in some cases went as far as jointly agreeing and producing planning and evaluation processes) produced better outcomes. Similar processes among other stakeholders in the project also had similar effects – for example, systematic and coordinated work to bring the local population together with organisations and institutions helped dialogue and mutual recognition.

Within the community, the family was the focal point both in terms of education and of possibilities for participation and organisation, and this allowed collective and personal growth. Bases were created for the development of knowledge and abilities to improve people's lives, and spaces for participation were opened that ensured that people felt that they were important in the development of the project.

The credibility of the paraprofessionals and the organisations and institutions and – above all – the credibility that people were gaining for themselves, generated important synergies that facilitated the solving of collective and individual problems.

Overall, the general perception was that the most important achievements of the project were those related to the growth of the people and their community. Their learning, the nature of the attitudes that they developed, the quality of the human relationships that evolved, and their understanding of early childhood, all these add up to lasting human achievements. The following testimonies illustrate this.

> *Many of the children that passed through the preschool are capable of becoming professionals.*
> *The most important part of the project was the training and the results it has on the families. We learned to respect children and to want more for them.*

Conclusions

This article presents some of the initial findings from the EI work with PROMESA. Credibility was identified by everyone who participated as a necessity if a project is to be effective – and credibility starts from mutual trust and confidence among all of those involved. That this is the case is evident from the nature of the project and its core focus on human development – on the human being. It is also evident in the nature of the training provided; and in the ways in which the project helped people to realise their potential through participation that reveals their capacities to resolve their problems and meet their needs.

Key is PROMESA's model of education and its pedagogical nature. Given this, it is essential that all theoretical principles and methodologies are in line with the needs of this kind of liberal education, an education that enables the kinds of collective and individual growth that makes social change possible. This is why the project was perceived as enduring: it produced changes, and the most important of these were in people. ○

Kenya: from objective outsider to objective insider: an experiential case of give and take

Peter Mwaura

The author is Lead Researcher with the Madrasa Resource Centre (MRC) in Kenya. In this article, he discusses his experiences in trying to hold the objective perspectives of an outsider researcher while recognising the need to go beyond psychometrical and methodological approaches. He argues that pragmatic and utilitarian considerations must be taken into account; and that researchers will often need to operate from within the project – to become 'insiders' – if they are to really understand what is happening in projects, and what therefore is helping to make them effective.

The MRC Regional Research Programme

Many intervention projects today are conscious of the need to include research as an integral part of their activities. This demand for research is derived from the need for project accountability to the stakeholders and beneficiaries, and the need for informed decision making processes. Emerging from these needs are questions about how the effectiveness of the research is affected by the nature of the placement of researchers in a project: are they to be 'insiders' or 'outsiders'? To determine this means reflecting on a number of questions, including: 'What are the mandates of researchers in an organisation?' and 'How does an organisation ensure that it maximises the utility of researchers?' and 'Isn't there a need for a balance between insider and outsider perspectives', and 'How can this be achieved?' Because of such questions, the whole subject of the merits and demerits of placing a researcher as an institutional outsider or insider is clearly a topic for consideration within the framework of the Effectiveness Initiative (EI).

In making decisions about the placement of the researcher, two conflicting schools of thought arise in relation to the utility, nature and requirements of research. One school of thought is oriented towards the scientific rigour of research (something that calls for quantitative justifications), and towards the need to retain the objectivity of research processes (something that gives validity and reliability to the research processes and outcomes). The quantitative research school of thought is more comfortable when the research design tends more to the experimental than non-experimental end of the research design continuum. The other school of thought (which is more oriented to management needs) focuses on the utility of research in giving answers to more immediate

Kenya: Mombasa Madrasa
photo: Jean-Luc Ray / Aga Khan Foundation ©

managerial concerns. As such, it is more comfortable with the collection of qualitative information, information that is seen to be too subjective to the quantitative school of thought.

I found myself torn between the two when I began my work in the MRC. In fact, I found that I moved from the hard line stance of an objective outsider to that of an objective insider. I want to explore this here, and to argue for the need to go beyond psychometrical and methodological perfectionism in determining researcher roles. I shall argue that pragmatic and utilitarian considerations must be taken into account, and that researchers need time and support well beforehand to understand the background, objectives and operations of the project.

The central hypothesis in this article is that researchers must keep the scientific skills of an objective scientific research methodology separate from the implementation processes inside the project. In my view, this is a necessary skill acquired by a researcher whether they are an insider or an outsider. I also believe that researchers with an insider's perspective have more to contribute than do those with an outsider's perspective. This is because of their thorough understanding of, and integration with, the projects.

To set the context for my arguments, I start by looking at the practical and theoretical bases of MRC operations that gave rise to the operational philosophy of the project: working in partnership with everyone; and participation for all. Following this, I consider how the research programme relates to this philosophy. I then consider the process of integrating the research within the framework defined by the philosophy, before concluding with some thoughts about the lessons I learned in the process of transforming from an outsider to an insider.

MRC operations and their practical and theoretical bases

Research is one of the three technical dimensions of the operations of Madrasa Resource Centre. The other two are: teacher training and mentoring; and

community development. The teacher training and mentoring dimension is concerned with the training and provision of technical support to the preschool teachers and other stakeholders and beneficiaries. The community development dimension is engaged in social marketing in the community, sensitising and educating community members, and mobilising them to support the provision of quality early childhood education and care. The research dimension is the most recent, dating from the conceptualisation of the second phase of MRC operations. It was designed to complete the structure of the project and contribute to greater synergy between the project's other two dimensions. As Lead Researcher, I was appointed in 1998 with an initial mandate to undertake a quantitative study on project impact.

MRC started out as an intervention project in a Muslim community in Kenya, and is based on needs and strategies identified by that community. It was founded on the principle of sensitising the community and mobilising its social and economic resources to address educational needs. The project was initially conceptualised in Kenya and later expanded into Tanzania and Uganda. It responded to the fact that the children of Muslim communities had inadequate access to local primary schools and limited options for early education. This was mainly due to the low socio-economic status of the communities and to a Muslim religious educational system that – although highly valued and viewed by many as an good educational option – had limited secular coverage. This deficiency gave children a comparative disadvantage in securing places in the secular school system and, later, in the labour market.

It was clear that the community knew what its problem was, but principles and strategies had to be developed that would cater for these various contextual factors, and direct the operations of MRC. The operational philosophy and strategies of the MRC are therefore based on a number of contextual and theoretical factors. These include the need to integrate both cultural and religious values into secular education; the need to find and use community resources and strengths; and the need to take into consideration known facts about child development. The communities saw the solution as lying in the establishment of quality ECD centres that would ensure their children's school and learning readiness while maintaining their cultural and religious norms. Further, given the learning deficiencies that were evident, a choice was made for a child-centred curriculum that included health issues, and the development of personality and of skills relating to learning how to learn. The curriculum was therefore based on the High/Scope® oriented active learning curriculum, but adapted to suit the local situation. The resultant centres use effective, community-based, and low cost approaches to early childhood education that promote educational excellence in Muslim children, and they aim to provide access to quality, culturally appropriate and affordable education. Strategies have been progressively developed over the years to achieve these ends.

So early childhood centres were established to be managed by the communities themselves, with backup support by MRC to facilitate technical, organisational and financial sustainability. Teachers are trained and communities sensitised, educated and mobilised. Schools are supported in creating effective management structures and in providing a quality teaching and learning environment for children. To accomplish these goals, a working philosophy has emerged among the staff. This binds them together – something that is strengthened by frequent feedback and consultation sessions – and each individual contributes to the best of his or her ability. The philosophy of community empowerment calls, in a very special way, for the placement of research within the operations of the organisation, not only for the provision of information for decision making, but also to demonstrate what helps to keep the programme on track.

The research dimension was conceptualised as being crucial in informing stakeholders and beneficiaries on issues such as effectiveness, impact, accountability, planning and development. But it has had to be organised so that it collects and analyses data in ways that respond to the

requirements of those who will use the information.

Integrating research with the project's philosophy

Upon employment, my focus as researcher was on designing the research on impact, and implementing it in such a way that both process and outcomes were adequately objective and valid. To this end I visited other projects to study their research design and operations. One of the immediate challenges in the design was the realisation that it was relatively difficult to talk about a control group when dealing with human beings. For example, it was quite clear that the children with no preschool experience who comprised the control group, could not be kept out of preschool just for the sake of the research. This indicated that, as much as we wanted to have complete scientific objectivity, it was not possible. We therefore changed the language from 'control' to 'comparison' group.

It took some time and effort for me to understand the organisation in terms of its defining variables, history, objectives, mission, operations and structure. This was done through what I call the reading-talking-listening-meeting-visiting-writing process. I went through the documentation available in the organisation and, as a back up, interviewed the MRC staff on various aspects of the project. This was done on an informal basis, but with the underlying objective of testing the understanding of the project that I had gained from the review of documentation. In doing so, some issues were made clearer and knowledge gaps filled. I also used a strategy of joining staff members during non-working hours as they talked, and just listened to their discussions. I attended various meeting and workshops organised by the staff and from there got a better understanding of some of the issues; and I participated in workshops and meetings organised by MRC. In addition, I visited centres to observe their daily operations and talk to the school management committee members and other stakeholders – such as teachers – to hear their views on the programme. Through all of this, I came to understand the organisation. And the more I understood about the project, the more I appreciated it, and the more I felt the need to actively participate in it and contribute to its success. This gave me confidence and the feeling of being an insider rather than an outsider. However this was not a very smooth process. At first staff members were suspicious but this situation eased as the days went by and as they came to understand that I was not a threat to their livelihood.

Meanwhile, conflicting viewpoints on the issue of research objectives emerged from different stakeholders. The management expressed the need for the researcher to not only implement a high quality scientific study on impact, but also to work from inside so as to contribute directly to the decision-making process and to empower the staff on research skills. In other words the researcher was expected to operate from the inside so as to fit in the holistic framework of the organisational structure, a structure that is characterised by mutual support and empowerment. It was clear as well that the management wanted the researcher to include short term studies that would give quick information for decision-making processes. The MRC has created a strong monitoring and evaluation system which is used for active decision making without going into deeper statistical analysis. It was also felt that the researcher would need to use the existing data and work in such a way that the staff would recognise the data that they had collected. In addition, it was necessary to take into consideration the perspectives of staff as continuous observers, and this also helped to ensure that the researcher was also observed. They were 'observing the observer'. Overall, it was felt that the researcher being an insider would help to establish a suitable environment to reflect on the operational culture of the organisation.

In relation to the definition of the researcher's roles, the reporting structure became an issue. There was a lively debate as to whether the researcher can report objectively while employed by the very organisation whose project is being researched. There was also the issue of balancing the carrying out of the study itself – which required a lot of time – and the capacity building that was required

from the researcher as an insider. Equally, the management-oriented school of thought accepted that objective reporting was crucial, but also stressed that useable information was crucial for decision-making in the organisation. It argued that research should be integrated into, and function within, the framework of the institution and its three complementary dimensions. But, at the same time, it accepted that the research programme needed autonomy in terms of objective reporting and the need to focus on programme impact. One outcome of this was that the administrative reporting lines had to be redefined.

The core question for me as the researcher was whether I could be objective enough in reporting my findings if I was working as an insider in the very project whose impact I was assessing. It was essentially a debate between the technocratic view of ensuring objective reporting and the policy makers' need to maximise the utility of the researcher. It was clear that the debate hinged on the objectives of the research, as seen by the various stakeholders. There was the underlying issue of the reporting line, and also that of the ownership of the project. Whose interests is the researcher serving? Is it the administration, the staff, the financiers or the community? How could the researcher serve the interests of all stakeholders? The defining variables of the placement of the researcher were therefore outside the research design and implementation process. At the end of all these debates, it was agreed that the research should be understood as being by an *objective insider*.

Another significant aspect of the whole scenario was the relationship of the funding agency with the implementation of the project. While the administration saw a clear demarcation between the functions of the funding agency and the implementers, the closeness of the funding agency to the programme left it ambivalent about the outsider and insider perspective. This was an interesting phenomenon, because the distance between the funding agency and the implementation process can dictate the agency's stand in the insider/outsider debate.

Uganda: *A community development officer visits a nursery school*
photo: Jean-Luc Ray / Aga Khan Foundation ©

Lessons learned

These reflections are based on my own experiences in moving from a research philosophy based around 'working on' to one based on 'working with'. I feel that, with the decision that my research should take an objective insider perspective, my mandate expanded to include relatively short term and inherently crucial studies such as the Effectiveness Initiative, and also service roles. There are also indications that staff members appreciate the research programme and that I am no longer perceived as a threat. This can be deduced from consultations. It can also be deduced from the fact that staff have requested me to assist in developing a management information system; building staff capacity in monitoring, evaluation and research capacity; and supporting staff in revising monitoring and evaluation tools. I have also been involved in the task of defining the operational models of the project.

My own belief is that research should be seen as an integral part of the development processes of a project. Contributing to these requires an in-depth knowledge of the project, and it may take time to really understand the principles and operations of a project. Researchers who are insiders are better able to do this than are outsiders.

Social relationships with the staff and other actors, beneficiaries and/or stakeholders are also important. Talking with them and being open to them, as well as explaining your mission to them, creates a friendly relationship which, in turn, creates confidence and lessens any suspicion. It is important to remember that the beneficiaries, including the staff in the organisation, could easily view a researcher as an 'auditor' – and auditors are perceived as working on the principle of 'everything is wrong until proved not to be so'. So suspicions could arise and these could hamper the acquisition of adequate quality data. Creating rapport induces positive participation by stakeholders and facilitates access to information.

Overall, while there is no doubt that the methodology must be of scientific quality, well justified quantitatively and objective, and must produce validated results, the decision to hire a researcher as an outsider or insider rests on factors beyond the given of scientific rigour. These include such utilitarian factors as the objective of the research, the availability of funds, and the extent to which the research objective demands collaboration with the staff. In addition – and perhaps more important – the operational principles and the philosophy of the institution may call for placing the researcher as an insider in order to maximise his/her institutional utility, and to ensure that the outcomes of the research are of maximum benefit because they have been generated by/with a researcher who is considered 'one of the team'.

In the case of my placement as an objective insider with MRC, it was a matter of 'give and take' and of receiving through giving: that was right in this situation. From the stakeholders' point of view, the question that lingers is 'What are we getting in return for what we are putting in?' In the context of the EI, what is being put in is considerable given the profound and searching nature of the EI, its approaches and its tools. ○

*In a High/Scope programme, students learn through active involvement with people, materials, events, and ideas. The High/Scope Foundation is an independent non-profit research, development, training, and public advocacy organisation located in Ypsilanti, Michigan, founded in 1970. The Foundation's principal goals are to promote the learning and development of children worldwide from infancy through adolescence and to support and train educators and parents as they help children learn. More information can be found at www.highscope.org.

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Acompañamiento: an emerging map of effectiveness

Ellen M Ilfeld

The article that starts on page 6 discusses how the processes of the Effectiveness Initiative (EI) are revealing what can be significant in influencing project effectiveness, and lists and discusses a number of these factors. This article discusses one way in which large quantities of this kind of material can be organised and worked with so that lessons can be drawn.

Acompañamiento is a word used by the Latin American teams within the EI to refer to a new paradigm of partnership. By acompañamiento we mean the collective construction and sharing of values, principles, visions, methods, burdens and responsibilities. Accompaniment (our English adaptation of the term as we use it), can exist in the many relationships all along the 'aid system', between donors and their partners, between NGOs and the community they serve, between community workers and the children, parents, and community members they work with.

The word itself is rich and evocative, having many meanings that all coalesce to describe the kinds of relationships that EI team members have seen as effective or contributing to the effectiveness of their particular programme. It is interesting to note that in English, accompaniment doesn't really catch the richer, more human meaning of the Spanish original: the Random House Dictionary (1973) defines it as ... 'a portion of the musical text designed to serve as background and support for more important parts'.

Even with this more modest meaning, it still represents what is emerging from the data as the essence of an effective stance or attitude that is appropriate for funders, sponsoring NGOs, programme staff, and community animadoras as they relate to the communities they wish to accompany.

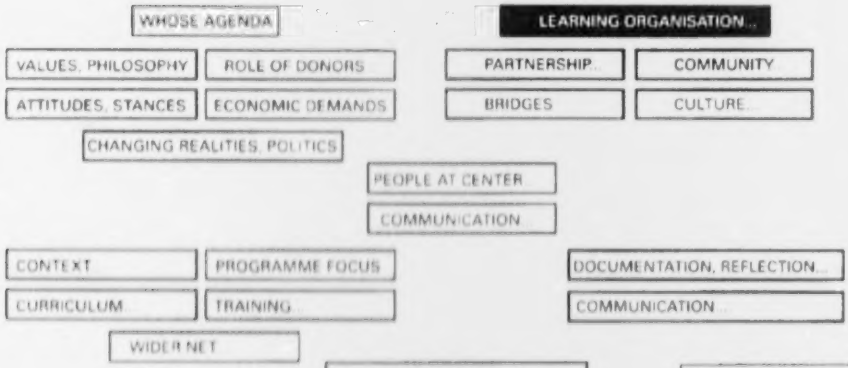
An initial set of over 500 themes that illuminate (and gave rise to) the concept of acompañamiento emerged from the analysis of cross-site discussions that have been held in the EI, and from related materials. To cope with the mass of materials, a tool called 'Atlas-ti' has been used. This is a software programme that allows the user to organise complex qualitative data and assign code words to portions of text. The software also offers a graphical mapping tool, to make it easier to identify and make sense of relationships between the themes that emerge, allowing them to be grouped into 'families'.

On the following page, we present an example of this mapping, titled 'The Accompaniment Families Map'. It shows the grouping of code families that together represent the concept of accompaniment. Each item on this first map you see is actually the name of a code family, containing between 6 and 60 themes. Thus, the Accompaniment Families Map in its entirety is made up of 24 sub-families. Because of space limitations, we are only able to explore one sub-family here.

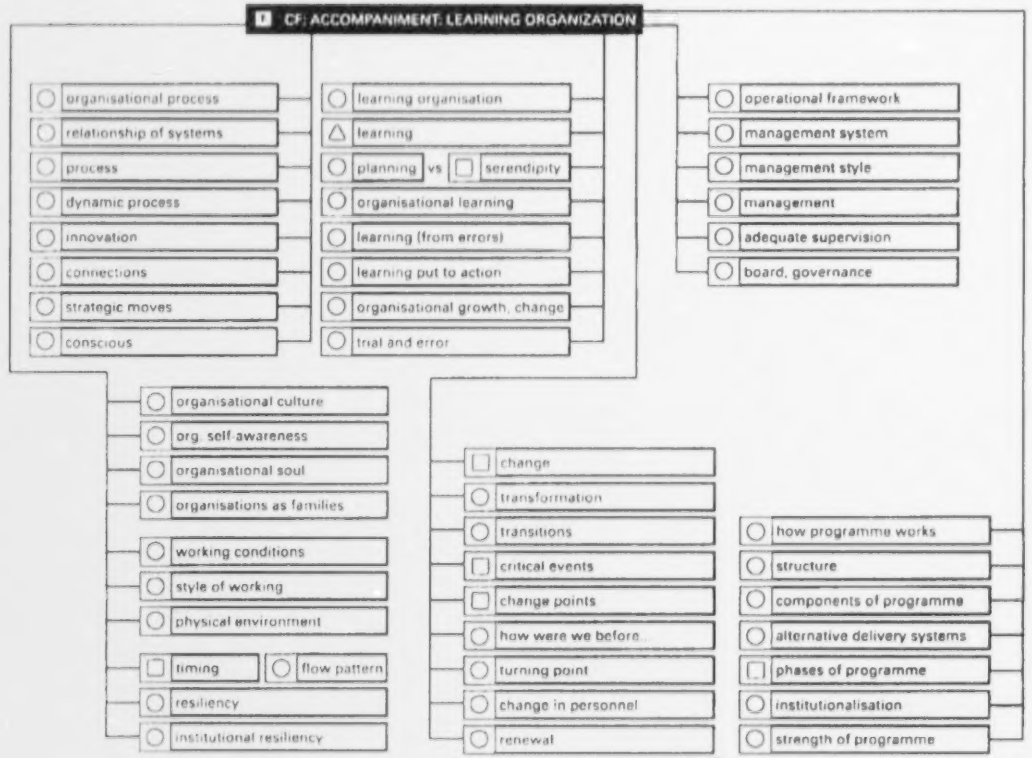
Reading the themes within this family makes it possible to get an intuitive sense of the types of issues that each family contains. However, it is important to remember that each theme is drawn from the original data, and is linked to one or several quotations from the cross-site texts that reside in the Atlas-ti database. Thus, once the map has been challenged and refined, the resulting family maps can be written up into *living documents*, discussing the themes in reference to the data, context, and source from which they were derived.

In this way, what we are learning about acompañamiento will be shown in all its dimensions, and can be more deeply and broadly understood. ○

The Accompaniment Families Map



The Code Family "Learning organisation"
This example shows how each code family can contain as many as sixty themes.



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Peru: child playing with a car made of recycled materials while his parents take part in a workshop
photo: Servicio Urbanos para Mujeres de Bajos Ingresos (SUMBI)

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